

Human Rights Institution-Building:

**A Handbook on Establishing and
Sustaining Human Rights
Organizations**



The Fund for Peace
in association with
**The Jacob Blaustein Institute for
the Advancement of Human Rights**

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AND SUSTAINING
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Introduction

The Purpose of this Handbook

As human rights activists, we share the goal of making our human rights work more effective. Our substantive work, however, has institutional implications. In order to carry out the important objectives of protecting and promoting human rights, more than knowledgeable, committed people are needed. Infrastructures which support our work, and allow us to sustain and expand it, are also critical. This handbook, therefore, is designed to look at the components of effective institution-building.

Perhaps we should start by defining our terms. When we talk about "institution-building," we are referring to the construction and maintenance of the basic underlying framework—structural, informational and psychological—of a human rights organization. We are referring to issues that preoccupy a human rights group when it is first getting started—things such as its mandate, bylaws, composition, division of labor and internal procedures—as well as those issues that relate to sustaining a group which are on-going, such as working environment, credibility, public relations, and a group's capacity to network, fund-raise and evaluate its work. By "human rights group" we mean to imply the broadest number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in protecting or promoting the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two international covenants, and the regional human rights charters.¹ Hence, this Handbook is addressed to any group which is concerned with civil, political, economic, social, cultural, development and/or women's rights.

We were inspired to produce a handbook on human rights institution-building by our observation that many human rights groups composed of committed people nonetheless become paralyzed in their second or third year. This often occurs not because they aren't doing good work, but because insufficient attention was devoted to infrastructural issues in the early stages of their development. Some of these groups eventually cease to exist, while others continue to operate, but at less than full capacity. Still others are forced to restructure by a crisis—the resignation of key personnel, the withdrawal of funding, a battle for control between two founders, and so on—but ultimately manage to survive and even prosper. In the process, however, substantial time that might have been devoted to human rights work is diverted to the process of organizational restructuring.

Organizational paralysis has many faces. An inadequate assessment of the needs of the community a group is designed to serve, for example, can result in a lack of responsiveness by the intended beneficiaries to the group's well-intentioned but misdirected programs. This, in turn, may cause the targeted community—or the public at large—to question the group's usefulness and resist working with it. Similarly, if a rights group lacks clear and coherent procedures regulating its internal day-to-day organization, members may be unable to coordinate their work as each staff person follows his or her own individual system for filing, case management, maintenance of financial records, etc. The problem of haphazard organization becomes magnified when a human rights group expands too rapidly, taking on additional responsibilities when it cannot meet the ones already on its docket.

Another common institutional obstacle to the achievement of human rights objectives is low morale among staff members. This can be caused by a number of factors. Autocratic leadership of a human rights group can lead to resentment and high turnover, as staff members are given little or no ability to be creative or responsible, or to exercise a measure of control over their own work. Similarly, in poorly organized groups with weak leadership characterized by unclear lines of staff responsibility and ad hoc or arbitrary decision-making procedures, clear accomplishments may be few and staff frustration high. Persistent over-work may lead to burn-out, particularly when group members attempt to seriously address a compassionate but unrealistic organizational mandate that was created in response to overwhelming needs by the community that the group was created to serve. When low morale or burn-out becomes endemic to a group, its efforts are crippled.

Power struggles within a human rights group can also take their toll. Struggles for dominance within a human rights group may arise when insufficient care is devoted to recruiting new staff or board members², as unspoken and widely differing agendas become increasingly visible and lead to conflict. Struggles may also come about when a group has no bylaws or constitution to govern the respective roles of the board of directors, staff and volunteers. For example, the board may attempt to supervise daily administrative tasks or second-guess the decision-making of the executive director³; volunteer activists may become alienated by a lack of accountability by the leadership; or staff members may rebel against the undemocratic practices of their executive director.

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights make up the International Bill of Human Rights. They are instruments of international law promulgated by the United Nations. Countries which ratify the two Covenants are required to report periodically to the United Nation's Third Committee on their compliance with these international laws. Latin America, Europe and Africa have also created regional human rights treaties and bodies charged with monitoring the compliance of ratifying nations.

2. We recognize that groups around the world have many names for the governing body of their human rights organizations. For the sake of simplicity, we refer to that governing body as a "board" or "board of directors" throughout this Handbook.

3. For the sake of simplicity, we refer to the director of the staff as the "executive director". This position is also commonly referred to as "staff director", "director", "president", "secretary general", "secretary", etc.

Money—who spends it and how it is allocated—can bring long smoldering internal tensions to the surface. When competitive factions arise within an organization and try to funnel money to their programs at the expense of each other and the group as a whole, the internal solidarity critical to a human rights organization can quickly evaporate. A group's effectiveness may also be impeded by a repeated failure to submit itself to a serious process of self-evaluation, postponing the correction of such chronic problems as inadequate leadership, vague objectives, absence of staff teamwork, lack of accountability, and so on.

Ultimately, any of these problems may act to damage the credibility of a human rights organization. A rights group with damaged credibility may not be able to obtain outside funding or have its documentation regarded seriously, and may be avoided by other NGOs. We have prepared this Handbook to enable groups which have undergone and survived these institutional problems—as well those which owe their success to adequately planning their infrastructures from the outset—to share their experiences. The Handbook is intended to help activists thinking about starting a new human rights group, new organizations already in existence, and older organizations which find that they now need to address institution-building concerns. Although it is impossible to anticipate every institutional pitfall that may beset a human rights organization, careful planning can play a significant role in preventing organizational paralysis. The purpose of this Handbook is to help groups anticipate institutional problems and develop structures and procedures that will help prevent them.

How this Handbook was Compiled

There are libraries full of information on institution-building in general, but very little of it is specifically directed to human rights organizations. Our task has been to compile and summarize the written expertise that already exists, and to interview a broad range of human rights organizations around the world to survey their start-up process, organizational structures, and advice for overcoming various obstacles encountered in the initial phases of their operations. In preparing this study, we conducted two to three-hour interviews with over 60 human rights organizations from Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. We had less extensive discussions with another 35 to 40 NGOs. In addition, we mailed a detailed questionnaire (see appendix A) in four languages to 600 human rights groups all over the world. The questionnaire asked groups to reflect on their early successes and failures and give us a sense of what their priorities were, which issues they found were crucial to resolve at the outset, and what information they needed to launch their effort.

Approximately 70 groups returned the questionnaire and many included supplemental information about their organizations. We also read thousands of pages of materials published by experts on non-profit organizations, training agencies and activists who have recorded their own experiences. The data from the interviews, questionnaires and literature on

non-profit organizations was then compiled and analyzed. We have synthesized the collective wisdom from these sources to create this Handbook.

Our approach was not scientific or statistical; we had neither the time nor the funding to undertake an academic research project. When we first conceived of the Handbook, we imagined that it would be a cursory review of some key human rights institution-building topics which we could summarize in 30-40 pages. But as we interviewed representatives of various human rights organizations, we found that although groups rarely receive training in this area, there is a keen interest in it and a recognition of the need to devote more attention to institution-building issues. The rich experience and advice offered by many human rights workers convinced us that a longer document made more sense. The Handbook is not meant, however, to cover every topic in human rights institution-building, nor does it attempt to deal with all subjects addressed comprehensively. Rather, it provides an introduction to a wide variety of key issues which most organizations must face.

The Handbook also does not address specific programmatic strategies and methodologies in human rights advocacy, monitoring and education. Each of these topics could fill a separate handbook. In fact, the Asian Forum on Human Rights and Development has recently published a *Handbook on Fact-Finding and Documentation of Human Rights Violations*⁴. In 1995, The People's Decade of Human Rights Education⁵ will publish a handbook with over 40 articles and case studies on human rights educational strategies and methodologies from around the world. Other guides have been produced on using the various international and regional inter-governmental human rights bodies⁶. We felt that it was important to restrict ourselves at the outset to institution-building, not only because it is a topic neglected by most human rights trainers, but also because it is one that has some universal relevance and application.

Human rights NGOs function on a broad range of levels. Some are grassroots and/or single issue organizations. Others operate nationally, regionally and internationally, with broad mandates encompassing multiple human rights activities. Recognizing this wide range of experience and mandates, our in-

4. Daniel J. Ravindran, Manuel Guzman & Babes Ignacio, *Handbook on Fact-Finding and Documentation of Human Rights Violations* (1994). Copies can be obtained from the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia), 109 Suthisamwinichai Road, Samsennok, Huaykwang, Bangkok 10310, Thailand. For a partial bibliography of other sources on fact-finding, please see Appendix B.

5. The People's Decade for Human Rights Education is an international organization engaged in "training of trainer" programs. For more information about the PDHRE, please contact Shula Keonig, People's Decade for Human Rights Education, 526 West 111th Street, New York, NY 10025, USA, Tel: 212-749-3156; Fax: 212-666-6325.

6. For information on how NGOs can utilize the various human rights bodies of the United Nations, groups may want to refer to David Weissbrodt and Penny Parker's *Orientation Manual: The U.N. Commission on Human Rights, its Sub-Commission, and Related Procedures* (1993).

tention is not to “teach” one “right way,” but rather to pose a range of questions that any group might find helpful in its early deliberations on institution-building.

Our research suggests that there are certain issues that almost all human rights groups must address if they wish to succeed, among them credibility, accountability, internal governance, fundraising and self-evaluation. Throughout the Handbook, we have tried to stress the importance of considering such issues, and in some cases, we have given examples of the different decisions human rights groups have made. In general, however, we have not held out particular methods as better than others. In the instances where we have favored specific strategies, it is because an overwhelming number of activists from a variety of countries and organizational backgrounds spoke with one voice on the subject.

Nonetheless, we recognize that due to the diversity of the human rights field, not every point made in this Handbook will be relevant to every organization. Our attempt to make this Handbook relevant to three different audiences—people thinking about starting a rights group, groups in the early stages of their development, and groups that have existed for several years but may not have sufficiently addressed institution-building issues—has made parts of it too elementary for some and perhaps too advanced for others. We felt, however, that given the paucity of information available on human rights institution-building, it was worth producing a somewhat uneven document in the service of reaching the largest possible number of activists concerned about these issues. We are confident that every type of human rights organization will be able to find something useful within these pages.

How to Use this Handbook

Having said that we think there are some universal questions, even if there are no universal answers, we want to emphasize that the strategies enumerated in this Handbook should not be used as a blueprint for functioning. This document should only act as a guide for considering a number of the issues activists identified as important. No organization should adopt the formulas or strategies of another, as no two organizations operate under exactly the same circumstances. When an organization adopts another group’s strategies or tools without doing its own thinking, it is likely to create a structure that serves neither its own needs nor those of the community it was intended to help. Some new human rights organizations assume that they should model themselves after internationally known Northern groups. Doing so, however, can alienate local constituencies used to dealing with different kinds of structures, and cut efficiency by creating foreign systems to which the human rights workers themselves have trouble adapting. Each organization is the best judge of its own particular circumstances and must define for itself the context, goals and methods by which it will operate. We recognize that the technical nature of the material in this Handbook may make it difficult for human rights activists to read it cover to cover in one sitting. Therefore, to the maximum extent possible, we have divided

the text into chapters on discrete human rights institution-building topics. We have tried to deal with each topic as fully and independently as possible to reduce the reliance on previous chapters for understanding. At the same time, we tried to organize the various issues addressed in a logical order so that each subject builds on the last. Most of the topics with which we deal in the Handbook, however, are intertwined. To raise money, you must have credibility. To have credibility, you must (among other things) have a reasonable mandate, recruit the right people and have a clearly defined division of labor. Your ability to recruit a strong staff, however, depends on your mandate, level of funding, credibility, anticipated division of labor, and so on. Due to the overlapping nature of these issues, and our desire to make it possible for readers to refer back to isolated chapters on topics of particular interest, some points are repeated in several different contexts. We apologize for any repetitiveness that resulted from our attempt to accommodate both those readers who will read the handbook sequentially and those who will prefer to use it as a reference book.

A Word about The Fund for Peace

The Fund for Peace Horn of Africa Program was created to assist Horn-based human rights groups in building the capacity and institutions necessary to protect and promote human rights in their region. The Program pursues this objective through three primary mechanisms: 1) the provision of technical assistance to individual human rights groups or persons seeking to establish such groups; 2) the organizing of training workshops for groups and individuals on relevant organizational and substantive human rights topics; and 3) the identification, screening and dissemination of resources in human rights education (both material and human) for local groups and institutions. Organizations focusing on women’s rights may be interested to know about Women’s Program of The Fund for Peace which operates out of our Washington office⁷. Despite the presence of the word “fund” in the name of our parent organization, neither the Horn of Africa Program, the Women’s Program, nor The Fund for Peace at large are funding bodies. We are a non-profit, non-governmental organization concerned with peace and human rights.

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7. For information about the Women’s Program, please contact: Ms. Hibaq Osman, Women’s Program, The Fund for Peace, 1511 K Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005, Tel: 202-783-4132, Fax: 202-783-4767.

GETTING STARTED

DEVELOPING A CORE GROUP

Most human rights organizations are initiated by one or two people who recognize the need to address a particular human rights issue or set of issues. Often they consult several others to help start such an organization. This small, core group of founders will determine the purpose of the potential organization, whom it will be designed to serve and what kind of activities it will undertake to achieve its purpose. Once agreement is reached on these issues in the core group, it often will bring more people into the organization, drawing on their key skills and contacts, as well as their ideas about how to refine the core group's agenda. Some new organizations form a planning committee to address the organizational questions: who, what, why, where and when.

The process of establishing a new human rights organization will depend greatly on the local environment in which it seeks to operate. In a repressive country, groups are more likely to start quietly with a few highly trusted friends. In more open countries where organizing is permitted, groups may take a broader approach, publicly announcing their intention to start a group and calling for interested parties—even if they are unknown to the initiators—to come to an inaugural planning meeting. In such a case, initiators may recruit like-minded colleagues by placing an advertisement in the newspaper, making an announcement about an initial meeting over the radio, leafletting, putting up posters in public areas, or sending out a letter. Most experienced activists, however, recommend a more targeted recruiting process whereby people with specific skills and contacts are personally invited to get involved. New organizations may want to consider whether specific groups—such as students, minorities or women—should be specially contacted, and whether it makes sense, at such an early stage, to invite members of the press whose coverage might help attract additional recruits and funding.

It is important for those opting for an initial planning meeting to structure its content carefully, as the meeting will create the first impression of the group's seriousness, merit and potential for success. There are several ingredients that will lead to a successful first meeting:

1. Set a time for the meeting that is convenient for those you wish to attend. Some considerations would include:
 - a) holding the meeting during non-working hours if you wish working people to attend;
 - b) avoiding a time likely to conflict with other important events or holidays;
 - c) assessing whether it makes sense to try to hold the planning meeting around the meetings or events of established organizations likely to attract the kind of people you want for your group;
 - d) setting the time far enough in advance so that people can plan to attend, but not so far ahead that they forget about the meeting;
2. Choose a wise and convenient location for the meeting:
 - a) is the location centrally located, easy to find, and, if possible, accessible to public transportation?
 - b) is it safe, quiet, comfortable and inexpensive?
 - c) does it have a neutral or positive reputation? (Using a government building, for example, or a site which has excluded certain groups in the past, could alienate prospective recruits or even prevent them from attending)
 - d) is it important to hold the meeting in a public place, rather than a private home? (In some societies, for example, it may compromise a woman's reputation to meet with men in a private home)
3. Plan the meeting carefully:
 - a) identify someone to facilitate or chair the meeting;
 - b) identify a person from the original core group to present its initial thoughts on what the group should do, how the mandate should be undertaken, who should do it, and why it is necessary;
 - c) decide how to structure the larger group discussion following the presentation;
 - d) identify someone to take notes;
4. In addition to the core group presentation and following discussion, consider including in the meeting agenda:
 - a) initial introductions. Having each meeting participant introduce him or herself and speak briefly (one or two minutes maximum) about what attracted him or her to the meeting helps people get to know each other. Core organizers should arrive early to personally greet newcomers and introduce them to others;
 - b) identification (time permitting) of one or two initial concrete projects for the group to undertake;
 - c) commitments of services or resources, no matter how small, from those who are really interested in becoming part of the group;
 - d) refreshments. It is important to create a warm, friendly environment for the meeting. Refreshments and an open period to socialize will enable participants to meet each other and discuss the session. This also gives the organizers a chance to speak with people who did not articulate their views during the meeting;
5. Start and end the meeting on time, and respect explicit time limits for each agenda item;
6. Follow-up. If participants have expressed a willingness to undertake specific assignments, core members should follow-up with them soon after the first meeting. Interest often diminishes as time elapses. Quick follow-up will also demonstrate that the group is serious about the work and expects commitments made to be respected.

DETERMINING MANDATE

Groups seeking to start a human rights organization seem to follow one of two strategies. The first is to identify a broad human rights concern and organize a group to undertake specific activities or campaigns to address that concern. The second is to form an *ad hoc* group to engage in a campaign or pilot project on one specific issue and determine whether an organization to address the broader range of issues attached to it is advisable at a later date. Whichever strategy is pursued, the purpose or mandate of the group should be determined at the initial planning stage.

Mandate answers the questions: What does the organization do? What are its primary goals and objectives? To determine a clear mandate, an organization has to ask itself: Why is a group necessary? Who will it serve and who will its members be? What will it do, and where and when will it do it? A group's mandate, in turn, will determine and define its activities.

The first question—why—establishes the need for the human rights effort being initiated. What is the problem to be addressed? The second question—who—addresses who you are, as well as whose interests you are hoping to serve. The composition of your group will help to determine what is realistically possible for you to accomplish. Are you a group of lawyers, doctors or journalists? Are you farmers? women? trade unionists? Are you from the same ethnic or regional backgrounds? As a group, do you speak a variety of local languages? Are you all from the same economic class? Do you have influence with the press, government officials or religious leaders? Do you have national or international contacts? How much experience, if any, do you have in doing human rights work? Do you have the access and contacts necessary to reach the target population?

New groups need to assess their skills, talents, contacts and interests to determine how effective they can be in carrying out a particular mandate. If you are all men, for example, it may be difficult to credibly make women's issues a central feature of your mandate. If you are all professionals without links to rural areas and without knowledge of local dialects, it may be difficult to establish programs in those areas. If you are illiterate farmers, it may be hard to address the legal issues associated with land reform.

What a group intends to do goes to the heart of mandate. The "what" question speaks both to the larger goal of the group, and to its specific, measurable objectives and methods. The goal of a group is usually to pursue a broad and sometimes wishful ultimate purpose—for example, to raise awareness of human rights issues, to stop human rights abuses, or to empower peasant farmers. The objectives, however, are much more specific; they address what particular outcomes the group hopes to achieve in *measurable* terms. Objectives usually start with phrases such as "to increase" or "to decrease" which lay the groundwork for measuring your degree of success later on.

Even older, more sophisticated groups commonly confuse objectives with methods. An organization's methods are the

means by which it achieves its objectives. Advocacy, documentation or human rights education are all *methods of, or means to*, achieving objectives such as reducing the incidence of domestic violence to which women are subjected, improving prison conditions, or increasing awareness about the legal rights of a disadvantaged minority. The confusion between methods and objectives is essentially a confusion of means with ends.

The following examples may illustrate the difference between goals, objectives and methods. Peasants working on a large farm are being exploited without their knowledge by managers who are paying them less than the agreed upon wages for their labor. Because most of the farmers are illiterate, however, they are unable to see that when they collect their wages at the end of each pay period, they are actually signing (by thumb-print) a ledger for the lesser amount, implying their acceptance of the lower wages. The illegitimate reduction of wages keeps the farming community extremely poor and exclusively preoccupied with their own survival, precluding any political organization to better their condition. Several members of the community recognize this problem and form a human rights group to address it. The group identifies its *goal* as empowering the farmers. Its *objectives*, however, are more specific: to increase understanding among farmers about wage exploitation and to reduce its incidence. These objectives can be measured by determining whether wages are in fact increased after a specified period of time. The creation of consciousness raising and literacy campaigns to combat wage exploitation constitutes the group's *methods* for achieving its objectives.

Or consider the case of a human rights organization which documents a country's abuse of civil and political rights. The *goal* of the group might be to promote the rule of law. Its measurable *objectives* might be to increase the accountability of the nation's judiciary; to decrease the number of political detainees held in the country's prisons; and to reduce incidents of torture and mistreatment at the hands of security officials. The *methods* by which the group pursued these objectives might include documenting violations in these three areas; circulating the group's findings to the international human rights and donor communities; and exerting pressure on members of the international community to use their influence to reign in the abusive government.

In determining objectives and methods, it is important to be realistic. The development of a realistic mandate requires a careful assessment of the human, material and communications resources at a group's disposal, as well as the environment in which it is to operate. Groups need to ask themselves questions such as: what are the organizing tools at their disposal (mass meetings, demonstrations, clandestine action, etc.)? What are the means for transmitting information (are phone lines and postal services in the country reliable)? Is the proposed mandate realistic given prevailing political and social conditions? Does it provide for the likelihood of at least some early successes (important for building the organization's credibility and fundability)? Is the scope of the mandate manageable? Does the statement of mandate provide some room for

flexibility in the case of an unanticipated change of political circumstances or need to address a new constituency?

There is some disagreement among human rights organizations as to whether they should limit the geographic and substantive scope of their work. Some rights activists feel strongly that there may be important reasons for declaring a broad mandate, and that local circumstances should determine whether a broad or narrow mandate makes sense. Some groups felt, for example, that their constituencies would not take them seriously or see the value of their group unless it appeared to be addressing their problems comprehensively. One activist noted that organizations and their mandates are formed in response to needs, and that in most parts of the world, needs are wide-ranging and great. This was especially true in countries with little tradition of civil society and only one or two human rights organizations. Several others reported that their mandates and scope had not been clearly defined at the start, but had evolved with time and experience. These groups maintained that they could not have anticipated the events which molded their mandates, and therefore there was no point in devoting significant time to this aspect of their planning.

Most experienced groups recognize the need to provide for flexibility—given the possibility of inaccurate foresight or changed circumstances—and argue that mandates must leave some room for change or an expansion of activities. At the same time, they feel that such expansion should occur only as an organization develops both competency in the areas of its initial activity and a reputation for credibility. While appreciating the overwhelming human rights needs of most countries and the unpredictability of circumstances, most experienced groups nonetheless feel that choosing a specific, clearly defined and manageable mandate is crucial to success. The prevailing wisdom is that when an organization tries to do many things at once, it tends to do none of them well. A new women's rights group which declares that it will monitor and report on human rights violations against women, furnish free legal assistance to disadvantaged women, establish a human rights education program to raise consciousness about women's rights, and set up a program of relief and rehabilitation for women refugees will be unlikely to fulfill its mandate. Such a broad agenda is rarely successfully carried out even by experienced groups. Mandates that are too ambitious often set a group up for failure by generating expectations that cannot be fulfilled. This works against trust and may deal an early blow to a group's credibility. Unrealistic mandates may further contribute to burn-out among group members whose efforts are diffused by pursuing too many objectives at once and who are unable to experience a sense of accomplishment. Mandates that are extremely broad in scope may also leave prospective supporters with the impression that the group is unrealistic and therefore ineffective.

The answers to the "where" and "when" questions usually flow naturally from those of the "why" and "what". "Where" speaks to geographic scope. Will the group address problems in one locality or a particular region? Will its work focus on national problems in one country or will it work in-

ternationally? "When" is usually, though not always, now since human rights groups tend to establish themselves in response to urgent problems.

Many groups—especially those involved in the provision of direct services to particular communities—emphasized the importance of consulting members of those communities before mandates are conclusively determined and activities are undertaken. There are numerous examples of well-intentioned efforts which failed because the needs of the target communities were assumed, rather than based on an actual assessment. If the target community does not perceive the problem that you have identified in the same way, or considers other problems to be of greater importance, your services or programs may not be effective.

Finally, it is essential that the initiators of a group (and all subsequent members) agree on the group's goals, objectives and methods, and commit them to paper. Differences on these points and expectations among group members may not be immediately obvious, so it is often worth spending the time to fully discuss these matters, even if conflicts emerge. The identification of conflicts is healthy and their resolution will usually strengthen the commitment of each member.

No matter how much thought is given to these issues at the beginning, however, groups should periodically review their mandates. Groups may find that a modification of mandate is necessary based on an evaluation of the organization's existing capacity to carry on rights work, an appraisal of the impact that it has had to date through its activities, and a revised assessment of the available resources necessary to accomplish its objectives. As one human rights group stated, reflecting on its own experience:

Now we see our initial response [to the human rights situation] was too broad and ambitious. We have had to admit to our limitations but this was done by experience. It was not possible to anticipate this and build it into our original mandate. We know now not to try to do everything over-night. Be small and effective.

For example, a year or two after its formation a group may find that although it was established to empower a particular grassroots population, it spends the vast majority of its time lobbying government officials. When a group seems to have wandered from its mandate, this may indicate that the mandate was too ambiguous, ambitious or constraining from the outset. Or, it could indicate that the conditions which led to the establishment of the group have changed, rendering the original mandate moot. Given the nature of the human rights field, even planning based on the best forethought cannot provide an absolute guarantee that an organization won't have to re-orient its mandate and activities over time. However, this should not cause groups to neglect the mandate-planning process, as organizations that start out without clarity of purpose

often find that their memberships have divergent values and interests, causing internal conflicts and a loss of credibility with the outside world.

WRITING ORGANIZATIONAL BYLAWS

What are Bylaws and Why are they Advisable?

Bylaws are internal rules—usually written by a group's founders—which govern the structure, organization and operation of a new group. Bylaws specify internal practices and procedures, and define the roles and relationships between members (if relevant), board and staff. Serving as an organizational constitution, bylaws also set forth the powers, rights and duties of the constituent bodies of the group. If thoughtfully cast from the beginning, bylaws can help an organization avoid power struggles and disputes over procedure.

Some groups, especially those which are unable to operate openly and those which function without boards of directors or membership, never write bylaws at all. Deciding to operate without bylaws does not necessarily pose a problem for groups composed of only a few individuals, where a formal structure is deemed impossible or unnecessary. Bylaws are required by law, however, in many countries, and most groups regard them as essential to the smooth functioning of their organizations.

If an organization intends to incorporate or otherwise legally register with its government, bylaws may be a prerequisite. Legal registration offers many advantages. A group that is not legally registered may have trouble opening a bank account and receiving funding, especially from foreign sources. In addition, potential members, staff and volunteers may be hesitant to join an organization which is not legally registered for fear of government reprisals. As a registered organization, a rights group will have legal standing to air its grievances in a court of law if it is attacked or its activities are thwarted by a hostile government. Legal registration can also make access to the press and international organizations easier.

Typically, however, the governments of repressive countries reject the registration applications of human rights organizations. Some human rights groups have used the law to get around this problem: instead of registering as human rights organizations, usually under the Ministry of the Interior, they have registered as non-profit companies or charities under the Ministries governing such entities. This strategy requires groups to adapt their organizational structures to fit the requirements for non-profit companies or charities, and to characterize their mandates in such a way as to ensure government approval. Hence the organizational structure and activities represented in their official bylaws—as registered with the government—will probably differ widely from their actual structure and activities. Naturally, there is the risk that an organization's real agenda may become known over time, causing the government to revoke the registration and persecute group members not only for their human rights activities, but also for misrep-

resenting their mandate. Most activists operating in these types of environments, however, have already reconciled themselves to such risks.

When are Bylaws Written?

Most groups which write bylaws do so early in the process of establishing their organizations. Some write them immediately upon making the formal decision to start a group, while others wait several months to see how their early operations might inform the content of the bylaws. A smaller number of organizations wait a year or more, feeling that it is premature to develop a structure and set of governing policies without the benefit of at least a year's worth of experience. Determining when to write organizational bylaws can only be done on an individual basis, but several points are worth considering:

1. Organizations which start with more than a few individuals, recruit a board of directors and membership, and/or anticipate growth, should consider the pitfalls of failing to specify the roles of the group's constituent bodies before conflicts over decision-making, rights and responsibilities arise. A lack of clarity over roles and procedure can paralyze an organization when everyone thinks that someone else should be handling a particular problem, or many people take responsibility for the same issues, working at cross purposes without knowledge of each other's efforts. In most cases, bylaws should be in place before boards of directors are formed and members recruited. In certain circumstances, however, it is wise to delay the creation of these bodies (see Chapter 5: Defining Internal Roles and Relationships), and in such cases, delaying the bylaws may be appropriate.
2. It is a good idea to build into the bylaws an amendment procedure which allows for their modification in case subsequent experience suggests the need for changes. Incorporating this flexibility into the bylaws may make their early establishment more palatable.

What Kind of Information is Usually Included in Bylaws?

Bylaws vary in their length and comprehensiveness, depending on the complexity and scope of activities contemplated by a new group. (We have included a sample of a fairly comprehensive set of organizational bylaws in Appendix D.) New organizations may wish to consult like-minded, successfully functioning NGOs on the type of information and procedures included in their bylaws for ideas. The bylaws of another organization should not, however, be adopted verbatim, as no two organizations are exactly alike, and your slightly different composition and mandate will require a unique organizational structure.

Bylaws usually begin with basic information: the organization's name and address, a declaration of its non-profit status, and the expected duration of its operations. Bylaws also

clearly specify the purpose of the organization which may include a description of the services it will provide or the activities it will undertake.

Most groups fall into one of two structural categories: 1) those governed by their membership; and 2) those which are governed by boards of directors, whether or not they also have members for fundraising or other purposes. Organizations governed by their membership will usually have an assembly of members (which may or may not include all members) which meets periodically and votes on issues relating to policy and personnel. If a new group wishes to develop a membership base—whether or not it is to be governed by that membership—the criteria for and different levels or types of membership should be enumerated. The membership section of the bylaws would also specify how often and when the membership meets, and include the terms of membership including voting, policy and decision-making rights, membership dues, duration of membership, etc.

Generally, both membership and non-membership-governed organizations have boards of directors. The specific role regarding the policy and decision-making power of the board of directors is also detailed in the bylaws. Will the board have a primarily supervisory role or will it additionally make policy and/or even take on discrete tasks of its own? If an organization is governed by its membership, how will the board's role be distinguished from that of the membership? The bylaws would also indicate some or all of the following:

1. How board members are chosen and by whom (elected by the membership? appointed by a special committee or the executive director?);
2. On what basis are they chosen (eligibility criteria);
3. Whether board members may also be members of the staff;
4. Whether board members may receive compensation for special services provided;
5. How long their terms of office are and how many times they may be re-elected;
6. Whether board terms of service will be staggered to ensure a mix of new blood and experience;
7. How often the board will meet and the number of board members required for a quorum;
8. How specific officers of the board, such as its chairperson, secretary, treasurer, etc. will be chosen and how long they will hold their positions;
9. How specific committees within the board will be established and what authority they will exercise (this is especially important with regard to an executive committee which may meet more regularly or in times of crisis to make emergency decisions);
10. Procedures for removing members of the board either for infractions, inaction or newly arisen conflicts of interest;
11. Procedures for replacing a board member who may become ill, leave the country for a period of time, etc.;
12. What fiscal responsibilities will be exercised by the board?

In addition to the board and membership, some organizations have advisory, ethics and other committees composed of

subsets of the membership. For each body, rights and responsibilities, rules governing elections and appointments, etc. should be enumerated in the bylaws.

The bylaws also specify how an executive director is chosen and sometimes outline on what basis and by what procedure s/he can be removed. In cases where there is already an executive director in place, the bylaws would determine how a succession would take place if the original head of the organization were to leave. The role and decision-making authority of the executive director and staff vis-a-vis the board and the membership (if relevant) is one of the most important issues that the bylaws address. (See Chapter 5 for a further discussion of the division of labor and decision-making power between boards and staff.) The executive director's managerial, fiscal and policy-making responsibilities should be clearly defined. Some bylaws also include the responsibilities and authority of other key members of the staff, such as the secretary and treasurer.

Some organizations build into their bylaws mechanisms for the staff to relate to the board independently from the executive director. This is to provide the board with more than one channel of information about the day-to-day activities of the organization, and to give staff the ability to present to the board differing perspectives, grievances, etc. that executive directors might prefer to keep to themselves. (Some such mechanisms are discussed in Chapter 5.)

The bylaws should also state how the organization will define its fiscal year and which parties/entities are entitled to receive, handle and manipulate funds. If branch offices or local representatives are anticipated, bylaw provisions should specify who will make those decisions and under what circumstances. Organizations may also wish to include a statement in the bylaws about their policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of gender, race, religion, national origin and sexual preference. Finally, the bylaws should outline a procedure for their amendment. Some groups additionally include a provision for the organization's dissolution.

CREATING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

OPENING AN OFFICE

Although the absence of an office at the beginning of an organization's life can be a significant inconvenience, it has not prevented many groups from operating and growing successfully. The vast majority of those surveyed were not able to move into an office of their own for six months to two years after they had begun to organize.

Nonetheless, having an office with basic equipment and storage facilities for what is likely to be a growing collection of human rights documentation is likely to enhance an organization's efficiency and make it more visible and accessible. As important, an office provides a space where an organization's staff, members, volunteers, etc. can centralize their activities, secure information that may be sensitive and conduct interviews and other business in private.

Determining if and when to secure an office is in most cases determined by funding realities. If a church, business or some other sympathetic institution can donate a facility that can be used during the organization's working hours, or a grant can be secured to rent or buy an office, most organizations will prefer to have an office as early as possible. Many new groups, however, spend disproportionate time and energy trying to raise money for office space, equipment and other infrastructural items at the expense of starting their human rights activities. An organization which spends a year tending to its infrastructure before undertaking any human rights work may not be taken seriously by members of the local community or funders. In most cases, human rights groups must demonstrate their competence and commitment before funders will consider supporting an office (see Chapter 11: Generating Resources).

DEFINING INTERNAL ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Any type of organization which wishes to implement its mandate successfully must have a functioning internal structure. There are no formulas for internal structure. Each group must carefully assess its mandate, composition, constituency and prevailing social, cultural, political and economic conditions in determining how to structure procedures, relationships and decision-making power. Bearing this in mind, however, we found that certain common themes, advice and pitfalls were stressed by many of the human rights groups surveyed. This chapter lays out some of the possibilities and issues to be considered regarding the roles of staff, volunteers, board of directors and members.

Volunteers and Staff

Volunteers provide the backbone of many human rights organizations—particularly grassroots ones. In addition to providing critical administrative support, volunteers can help train recruits, disseminate information about a group's work and help spread awareness about human rights generally. Volunteers can also serve as an important network to get the word out when members of a group are under attack by hostile forces,

or hide materials when an organization's office is subjected to security raids and confiscations. Cultivating volunteers is important not only because it increases the capacity of a particular human rights organization, but also because it enlarges and feeds the human rights community.

Most human rights groups begin as volunteer efforts. In the very beginning, it is usually the initiators themselves who do the work. Groups subsist for varying degrees of time in this state; if a new group has been able to recruit competent and committed volunteers outside of the initiators who can devote substantial time to the organization's activities, then the group may be able to survive for some time without a paid staff. Most groups, however, feel strongly that a full-time staff is essential to cope with the demands of human rights work and to operate professionally and efficiently. Few people are able to volunteer on a full-time basis indefinitely.

Whether and when to hire staff is a financial issue for most groups. Many groups start with only one paid staff member who coordinates volunteers and does much of the work him or herself. At this stage, board members (if they have been appointed) may also be willing to take on some of the activities normally reserved for staff. (This, however, should be regarded as a temporary situation, as it is crucial that once a staff and board are in place, their roles be distinct.)

The transition from a largely volunteer effort to a staffed organization can cause difficulties for a rights group if it is not handled carefully. As an organization's role becomes more defined and its work more structured, it may lose some of its egalitarian feeling. Volunteers may now feel that they are at the bottom of the hierarchy despite their dedicated service which may have predated that of those now being hired. It is critical, therefore, that the board (if there is one) and a group's initiators consider the impact of hiring staff on whatever structure already exists, and take care that necessarily changing roles do not alienate volunteers who, despite their unpaid status, are vital to the organization's functioning. The board or initiators of the group can help minimize such tensions by:

1. Ensuring that staff persons chosen will be sensitive to volunteer dislocation;
2. Creating a democratic internal structure (see Chapter 8: Organizational Health) which minimizes hierarchy and maximizes volunteer participation;
3. Holding regular meetings where volunteers and staff exchange information and brainstorm together (this can help volunteers feel part of the team);
4. Catering as much as possible to the interests and skills of volunteers when assigning them work (volunteers are more likely to sustain their involvement when they feel inspired and useful; some groups have volunteers fill out forms specifying their interests and talents which help coordinators match volunteers with projects);
5. Appointing a staff member to serve as the long-term contact person for volunteers. This person would be responsible for recruiting, orienting, training and integrating volunteers into the office, as well as for coordinating volunteer efforts once volunteers have been assigned specific

- duties or to a particular project. (Volunteers whose responsibilities and supervisors change constantly tend to develop less of an investment in the organization);
6. Soliciting the suggestions and advice of volunteers and taking some time to get to know them personally. (Everyone is knowledgeable and powerful in their own way. Taking the time to discover and appreciate a volunteer's special skills and talents can help minimize any bad feelings about being at the bottom of the power pyramid);
 7. Finding ways to recognize and reward volunteers (i.e. giving the most industrious or faithful volunteers titles, more responsibility, public thanks, etc).

In the immediate aftermath of a transition from a volunteer-only organization to a staffed one, there may be confusion about the roles of each. To avoid confusion and a breakdown of trust between volunteers and staff, it is important to immediately distinguish the two groups in terms of responsibility and authority. In most cases, volunteers are responsible only for the work assigned to them, although they may be encouraged to make suggestions or take initiative in certain areas. Volunteers are not policy or decision-makers (unless they are board members) except in rare instances where a volunteer has been with the organization a long time, has assumed a great deal of responsibility, and is treated like a staff person except for the fact that s/he is not paid.

Once an organization has staff and volunteers in place, it will need to determine the structure of the office—namely who among the staff and volunteers is responsible for what. Again, there are many effective models. Some larger human rights organizations are divided into departments, with each department having its own coordinator. Departments are sometimes organized around a function, such as publicity, publications or fundraising, or devoted to a particular funded project or one of the regions in which the organization operates. The coordinators sometimes join the executive director and a limited number of upper-echelon staff such as the assistant director and treasurer to form the NGO's management team. The management team might have responsibility for debating issues that face the organization and periodically carrying recommendations to the general staff, board and/or membership. The general staff or membership might or might not then be given the chance to accept, modify or reject recommendations by vote or consensus, just as the management team might or might not have the power to over-rule that action. In the event of an impasse the executive director, sometimes in consultation with the board, usually has the power to make a binding decision.

Other organizations are run almost exclusively by the executive director with staff contributing their viewpoints but having no decision-making power. Still others are run almost entirely by the consensus of the entire staff, although this is unusual in larger organizations. Many human rights groups told us that they regarded democratic decision-making and maximum staff participation in formulating agendas, timetables, and implementation strategies as critical both for long-term efficiency and for internal and external accountability. Some groups pointed out, however, that not every staff member is

qualified to make policies and decisions, and, in societies where authoritarianism and hierarchy are deeply ingrained, it may be difficult to structure an organization democratically, as people will not respect an executive director who does not "take charge". Although it may not be possible to achieve a perfect democratic organizational structure, most groups strongly advocated breaking with tradition in this regard and becoming trail blazers in society for a new, participatory model of operation (see Chapter 8: Organizational Health). However an organization may structure itself, groups with unclear lines of staff responsibility and *ad hoc* or arbitrary decision-making procedures tend to generate frustration and low morale among staff members, leading to work slow-downs, high turn-over and sometimes even a poor public image. If insufficient attention is paid to effectively structuring a group early in its existence, restructuring later may be difficult due to the inter-personal dynamics and sub-organizational agendas already firmly in place.

The Board of Directors

Group initiators recruit board members for a variety of reasons including: 1) to assure that the broad organizational purposes of the group are being served; 2) to review and approve program plans and budgets; 3) to bring prestige, credibility, skills, and access to the group; and 4) to raise money. Not all human rights organizations have boards of directors. Some smaller, grassroots-oriented groups, for example, feel that they do not need a board for oversight reasons because all decisions are made consensually; they are better off with a low profile; and the small cost of their activities is covered by the members themselves. Many such "low profile" organizations nonetheless benefit from having a board and recommend its establishment. The majority of human rights organizations surveyed, however, do have boards of directors though they range in character from bodies which simply rubber-stamp all policies and decisions of the executive director, to bodies of informed, committed activists who devote substantial time and energy to the human rights cause. Groups which aspire to the latter scenario should devote great attention during the recruiting process to identifying individuals who will take the work of the board seriously. (See the Chapter 6 on recruiting for a further discussion of this issue.)

At what developmental point groups should establish a board is a tricky question which, as usual, can only be answered by each group according to its unique circumstances. Boards are mandatory according to the laws establishing tax-exempt organizations in some countries, so there may be no choice in the matter. Most groups—particularly those which decide that a prestigious board is crucial to their credibility—establish boards early in the hopes that they will help the group attract funds and develop the confidence of the communities to be served. In many cases, group initiators know the people being asked to join the board well, and have confidence in their knowledge, skills, commitment and integrity, so there is no reason to wait. There may be instances, however, when it is wiser to delay the establishment of a board of directors. Several groups

reported forming a board at the outset and realizing a year or so into their work that most of the members were neither serious nor responsive. This occurred despite the fact that groups knew some of the board members appointed personally and others by their fine reputations. The fact is, often potential board members are knowledgeable, skilled and reputable, but your cause is not a priority for them. Although they believe in your cause and so are willing to lend their name to it, they are not sufficiently committed to it vis-a-vis their other competing interests.

Another common problem arises when few or none of the candidates for the board have human rights experience. Groups may identify well-known and reputed academics, lawyers, religious leaders, elders and trade unionists, for example, who confer credibility and visibility but have no specific expertise in their cause. Others may be recruited solely for their access to government officials or certain constituencies, or to give an organization a national profile. This is unavoidable in many countries where human rights work is just beginning. But even when a group feels reasonably certain that a potential board member will be committed and active, it is not advisable to rush to put him or her on the board. If groups can possibly afford to, they should wait to see how active s/he is willing to be before placing him or her on the board. Some groups start with only two or three board members about whom they feel absolutely confident, then slowly recruit new members as the commitment and usefulness of others are established.

The number of board members ranges from quite small (3-5) to quite large (30 or more). In determining size, it is necessary to determine the role of the board. What knowledge, skills, access, etc. are needed in the board and how many people might this suggest? A very small board of 3-5 people might be appropriate for a small group engaged in a very specific, localized activity such as the provision of legal aid to a particular indigent population. If all five are leaders from the community being served, there may be no need for more members; the five can easily handle the board's supervisory, fundraising and credibility-bestowing functions, and with only five, meetings are easier to schedule and regular contact is enhanced. Larger organizations, however, especially if they have branch offices or international affiliates, may require a larger board to cover the broader range of activities undertaken by the group. Generally speaking, groups need to find a balance between covering the skills and talents needed on the one hand, and keeping the board small enough to be manageable and communicative on the other.

The level of initiative, policy and decision-making power given to a board varies according to each group's vision for the organization and what its initiators believe is realistic to expect from a board, given local circumstances. The most active boards may initiate projects; make and supervise the implementation of managerial, program and fiscal policies; monitor and evaluate the staff's performance and effectiveness and represent the organization publicly. Other organiza-

tions, wary of this model because of its likely overlap with the role of the staff, restrict the role of the board to loosely supervising the organization's activities and approving or disapproving of the policies and projects set forth by the executive director. Some human rights groups—particularly those working in hostile or distrustful environments—establish a board primarily to give the organization credibility and protection. In such cases, the board may in reality not even play its typical supervisory role.

In determining the role of the board, groups must find the happy medium between under and over-involvement. On the one hand, the board may be the only check on what one activist called the "one-man show" (an autocratic executive director who in the name of efficiency prevents staff from playing any role in policy or decision-making). Particularly when the board is made up of individuals elected by the membership-at-large, its vigorous oversight role can help hold an organization—particularly its executive director—accountable. An inactive or passive board may invite self-serving or arbitrary behavior by elements of the organization's leadership. Some human rights groups note that when a board fails to serve as a check on executive staff, internal democracy may be sacrificed (see Chapter 8: Organizational Health).

On the other hand, a board that is excessively involved can paralyze a human rights group. Meeting infrequently but attempting to second-guess the staff on matters requiring an intimate awareness of often rapidly changing circumstances on the ground, the board may move beyond supervision to micro-management based on intuition rather than information. The executive director may be virtually forbidden to act on anything other than internal office management without seeking and obtaining board approval.

The ideal role for the board of directors will depend to a great extent on the composition of the board and its level of expertise in the specific human rights activity being undertaken by the group. In the case of an organization whose board is composed of individuals with experience commensurate to that of the executive director, the balance of power between the board and the staff or secretariat may be weighted in favor of the board. However, in cases where most persons on the board were elected or appointed because of their prestige, ability to raise money, contacts, etc., and not for their specific expertise or vision, it may make sense to increase the prerogative of the executive director.

Whatever the formula, the role of the board must be clearly defined from its inception. Once this is done, the initiators of the group, or more likely the new board itself, will need to determine who is responsible for what. Larger, more active boards usually create committees to deal with the various aspects of their work. The most common committee categories pertaining to the overall functioning of the organization are: executive, finance, personnel, fundraising, nominating (new members of the board) and programs. The Brooklyn In Touch Information Center, an organization which provides manage-

ment assistance to nonprofit organizations⁸, distinguishes these committees as follows⁹:

1. Executive Committee: Coordinates the work of all the other committees; maintains focus of the organizational plan for short and long-term goals; prepares agendas for board meetings; makes decisions on items which need response between meetings and calls emergency meetings; ensures that the organization's administrative, organizational and legal structures are adequate and appropriate; ensures that the organization and its board meet all applicable legal requirements;
2. Finance Committee: Prepares with the executive director [or approves] yearly operating budget; hires [or approves of] an accountant [if financially feasible]; monitors fiscal reports to funders; maintains records and timetables for leases, contracts and insurance; oversees preparation of fiscal reporting, including spending patterns, cash flows and long range planning;
3. Personnel Committee: Maintains job descriptions for all staff; hires and evaluates the executive director; reviews and makes necessary adjustments yearly on personnel practices; handles staff grievances; oversees the executive director's administration of staff evaluations; is available to the executive director when necessary for staff hiring; sets policies on how volunteers should be used in what areas, and how the organization should treat, recognize and celebrate its volunteers;
4. Fundraising Committee: Determines which types of funds will be accepted [individual? union? corporate? government? foreign?]; develops fundraising plan; identifies potential funding sources; is willing to represent the organization at fundraising meetings; monitors the timely submission of reports to funders; reviews grant proposals; maintains a timetable of submissions to renew funding¹⁰;
5. Nominating Board Committee: Reviews and updates by-laws on a yearly basis; maintains a record of the terms of office of all board members; maintains and develops a roster of the names of potential board candidates; assesses on a regular basis the skills of current board members and whether those skills are still needed; recognizes and nurtures existing board members and offers them opportunities to develop and grow as leaders; handles the recruitment process, makes presentation of candidates to the board and orients new members once they are approved;

8. Brooklyn In Touch Information Center Inc., *Building a Board of Directors of a Nonprofit Organization*. The Center's address and telephone is One Hanson Place, Room 2504, Brooklyn, NY 11243, USA, tel: 718-230-3200.

9. We have modified the Brooklyn Center's Description slightly to make it more relevant to non-U.S. based groups.

10. Several activists observed that many board members do not fully understand the vital role they need to play in fund-raising. Staff, they noted, are often in the uncomfortable position of having to repeatedly remind board members of their responsibilities in this regard.

6. Program Committee: Develops a yearly work-plan for each program based on the last year's experience, available funds and staff; considers new programs; interacts with other networks and coalitions; ensures that the organization's programs and services are appropriately addressing community and/or client needs; participates in community relations activities as emissaries of the organization (appearing at speaking engagements, publicizing the organization's programs or services, etc).

Other possible committee topics might include media relations, public relations/outreach and training. For many human rights groups, the broad range of activities described above is unrealistic or perhaps even too intrusive. We included a comprehensive description of a board's mandate to trigger ideas, not to suggest that this is an appropriate structure for every organization. In most human rights groups that we know of, the staff performs many of the functions enumerated here as board committee items (preparing a budget, setting board meeting agendas, handling grievances, organizing volunteers, identifying funders, etc). Board committees are established to make sure these activities are going smoothly, however, as the full board is the entity with ultimate responsibility. It seems to matter less that there be any particular type of division of labor and responsibility between the board and staff than that there be clear distinctions between the two.

Members

Many human rights groups have a fourth internal constituent body: its membership. As noted earlier, some of these organizations are membership-run: the membership makes up a general assembly which elects a board of directors and has some role in policy and decision-making. Other organizations have members who may be entitled to certain benefits or inside information, but they do not have policy or decision-making power. Memberships of this kind may function primarily as bodies which sustain the organization by making financial contributions, conferring visibility and credibility by virtue of their numbers, and providing services or contacts to the organization. Though these organizations have members, their operations are controlled by the board.

As in every case, clearly defining the role of the membership is crucial. Precisely what are the rights and responsibilities of the members? Do they comprise a primarily dues-paying body or do you hope to parlay for the organization some additional services and volunteers? Can membership represent the organization in public settings? Can members act as staff by providing organizational services in their localities? How will the staff and board interact with the membership? How will the membership be kept informed of the organization's activities?

Relations Between a Group's Constituent Bodies

As alluded to earlier, whatever the formula, it is essential that the division of labor and authority among the board, staff,

volunteers and membership be strictly defined and that it provide for a system of checks and balances. Regular reporting mechanisms and channels of communication between these bodies should be specified. (Some groups accomplished this by making one or more staff members responsible for regularly communicating with each one.) Likewise, it might be wise to designate a board member to keep the staff apprised of board deliberations and activities. Some boards include a voting or non-voting staff member, and many invite multiple members of the staff to participate in board meetings. Some organizations recommended that additional mechanisms be developed for regular and direct contact between staff and the board members specifically responsible for monitoring their programs. It might also be wise to devise a mechanism for handling conflicts that arise between the board and staff, as such problems can easily flow into the public domain and damage the reputation of a human rights group struggling to establish credibility. (One experienced human rights organization noted that when conflicts between the staff and board spill over into the membership, they usually become more serious and can result in a loss of membership.)

To assist groups in defining their structure, SHATIL¹¹—an Israeli NGO training center—developed the following exercise for determining the matrix of responsibilities: Groups are asked to look at each of the numbered tasks below and determine: a) what entity or individual currently has primary responsibility; b) what entity(ies) currently have secondary or support responsibility; and c) what entity(ies) *should* have primary responsibility. Groups are then asked to review their responses and note what changes, if any, might be desirable.

1. Set overall organizational goals, policies and priorities
2. Establish operating procedures for the organization
3. Evaluate activities and services
4. Hire the executive director
5. Hire other staff
6. Raise funds
7. Develop project budgets
8. Develop overall annual budget
9. Approve annual budget
10. Provide fiscal oversight
11. Expand funds based on approved budgets
12. Carry out services
13. Provide administrative support
14. Coordinate organizational activities
15. Provide agency direction on a regular basis

We would add the following to this list:

1. Recruit and coordinate volunteers
2. Devise media and public outreach strategies

3. Orient and train staff
4. Orient and train board members
5. Recruit and service members
6. Deal with policy-makers

RECRUITING

Key to the success and even survival of a human rights organization is the quality of its members. Those who are officially associated with an NGO (board, staff, members and volunteers) constitute its face to the world. If a staff member is ignorant of a current campaign, a local branch takes a public position antithetical to the mandate of the larger organization, an activist demands deference from the local people with whom s/he is working, or a recently appointed director of the board shows him or herself to be unfamiliar with the fundamental human rights issues being addressed by the group, the reputation of the organization as a whole suffers. Especially in the formative stages of a human rights organization's development, its credibility may be determined solely by the reputations of its principle actors—particularly that of its executive director.

Before an organization recruits members for its constituent bodies, it must define its needs and establish what role each body is to play. What skills, experience, contacts and personal qualities are necessary for each body? Are there other considerations such as ethnic, gender or religious diversity that need to be taken into account? Once this has been determined, recruiters can move to developing staff, board, membership or volunteer "job descriptions" and criteria for prospective applicants and recruits.

The following is a compilation of points human rights activists felt groups should consider in recruiting members of the staff, board, and, to a lesser extent, members and volunteers:

1. Is it clear from the start that recruits share a commitment to the explicit mandate and the implicit values and attitudes of the organization?
2. Do recruits have a reputation for integrity? (Past involvement in human rights abuses, racist or sexist behavior, etc. can harm an organization's credibility even on the level of its membership and volunteers);
3. Do recruits' past activities and affiliations indicate that they are capable of being non-partisan while linked to the organization?
4. Do they have skills and/or resources (including financial) that will benefit the group?
5. Do they have some familiarity with the fundamental principles of human rights embodied in the Universal Declaration and the principal international rights covenants? (Some allowance may be made for the appointment of persons whose actual knowledge of human rights fundamentals is shaky, if it is not their expertise in such matters that caused the organization to recruit them in the first place. Such persons might be board members appointed for the credibility they lend to the organization, an accountant whose financial skills are paramount, or an edu-

11. SHATIL has developed many useful training materials, some of which are available in English. For further information, please contact: SHATIL, 9 Yad Harutzim Street, Jerusalem 93420 or P.O. Box 53395, Jerusalem 91533, Israel, Tel: 972-2-723597, fax: 972-2-735149.

cator whose teaching skills are considered more important. In some instances, it is easier to train persons who already possess skills critical to the functioning of a group in the fundamentals of human rights than the other way around);

6. Do they have an understanding of the specific human rights issue(s) being addressed?
7. Is it possible that recruits have hidden agendas for joining the organization? This would include political, ethnic, or religious agendas, as well as overriding personal interests in gaining the prestige or perquisites that may come with international travel, access to an office vehicle, etc. Rights groups must be on the look-out for recruits who are primarily interested in bolstering their resumes or, in countries with high unemployment levels, are simply desperate for a salary. (At least one organization reported the experience of hiring a staff member whose real intention was to use the group as a platform for raising funds to launch his own organization.) In countries with high levels of political, ethnic or religious polarization, many activists also exclude candidates with active partisan affiliations;
8. Do you need to be careful (to avoid the appearance of bias) about hiring too many members of the same ethnic, linguistic, or religious group in a country with a diverse population?
9. Is it possible to recruit from the constituency the group is established to serve (people from the local community, former political prisoners if the focus is detention, students if the mandate involves formal education, etc.)? The inclusion of members of the target population a group is trying to serve will ensure that organizational activities remain relevant, and enhance credibility and access.

Some further questions might be considered for staff and board recruits specifically:

1. Do recruits have the necessary experience in and knowledge of the needs and resources of the local community and/or field of activity being targeted by the organization?
2. Do they have skills necessary to the smooth functioning of the organization (communication, literacy, research and writing ability, knowledge of basic office procedures, language ability, etc.)?
3. Do recruits appear willing to stay fully informed about the program and services of the group and represent these programs and services to the community?
4. Will recruits keep abreast of current events that affect the community and/or field of activity in which the organization is engaged?
5. Do they exhibit leadership qualities?
6. Do they have influence with important players with whom the organization deals?
7. Do they have congenial personalities and work well with others?
8. Are they team players?

9. Will recruits make personal sacrifices as necessary (long working hours, exposure to risk, and—in the case of staff—lack of job security)?
10. Will they be able to tolerate stress and resist community pressures to conform?
11. How will recruits deal with an organizational conflict or crisis, a dangerous security situation, or a judgment call on a particularly sensitive issue? (Some human rights groups create mock scenarios of situations likely to occur during a recruit's tenure with their organization to gauge the candidate's instincts and judgment.) Ascertaining a recruit's attitude toward a population that is largely rural, disadvantaged, and illiterate, for example, would be critical in an organization dealing with such a community, as highly educated individuals coming from outside the community could be patronizing, elitist, or simply uncomprehending. As one activist related:

We want to know if a prospective member of the staff has ever actually spent some time in the rural area and understands rural problems. We want to know if that individual really understands rural people and customs. So we create scenarios. We ask: "How would you react if an illiterate village elder asked you to get him tea, cigarettes, etc?" If the job applicant responds that that is a secretary's job, we would be worried about whether he truly shares our values and attitudes)¹²;

12. Are recruits willing to accept that they are substantively accountable to the community being served and financially accountable to funders?

For members of the board, recruiters might additionally consider whether candidates are willing to directly or indirectly assist the organization in its fundraising efforts; and whether they have the ability and interest to raise questions, give constructive criticism and deal with conflicts rather than gloss over them.

Selection, however, is a two way street. Just as organizations want to be careful about whom they chose to fill a particular vacancy, applicants will also assess the organization to see if it will offer them that for which they are looking. Recruiters should think about the reasons why people join human rights organizations. People are usually attracted by their commitment to the cause, but other factors may be equally or secondarily important. People also join human rights groups to meet people with similar interests and values, gain experience

12. Naturally, this example is culturally specific, as it is easy to imagine other circumstances where the refusal to "bring tea" would not reflect elitism, but rather an appropriate unwillingness to be treated in a subordinate fashion. If, for example, a highly educated male human rights activist repeatedly asks his female colleague to bring him tea, but is unwilling to do the same for her, it could reflect an attitude of male superiority worth addressing.

and contacts in the field, gain access to opportunities for leadership, "be in the know" and obtain "inside information" before the general public, and to influence the organization's policy. Is your organization going to be attractive to the people you want to recruit? Does it offer an inviting work environment (see Chapter 8: Organizational Health)?

Finally, many human rights groups with whom we talked stressed the importance of developing a system of initial, as well as ongoing institutional education for the staff, board, volunteers and membership. Such training, they felt, should include basic human rights principles, the vital issues that they give rise to locally, and the concrete ways the organization is dealing with those issues. Some groups complained, however, about the "brain drain" phenomenon: scarce organizational resources are devoted to training recruits who are then attracted by—and more eligible for—the growing international human rights market. Numerous "trainees" sent to training programs in the North fail to return home to their sponsoring organizations because they find Northern opportunities and resources more plentiful. Organizations should be aware of this problem and develop mechanisms for ensuring that those sent abroad will respect their commitment to return to the original group with their newly acquired knowledge and skills. Rights groups may also want to explore methods of on-site training and internships in other developing countries which may offer more relevant working conditions and expertise, while at the same time minimizing the risk of emigration.

Who does the Recruiting and Where do they Look for Candidates?

In the earliest phase of an organization's life, the group's founders must do the recruiting for all four constituent bodies themselves. At a later stage, some organizations leave the task of recruiting in all categories to the staff. One person may be designated responsibility for identifying and screening recruits, though other staff, as well as the board and members, are encouraged to put the word out and suggest possible candidates. In the case of hiring a staff person, however, the question of who makes the ultimate decision arises. Some activists argue that this should be a collective decision by the existing staff rather than a unilateral decision by the executive director (or, if an executive director is being hired, on the part of the board). Since staff may have to work in close quarters with the recruit, it is important that they like the person and regard him or her as competent. Collective hiring decisions, however, may not make sense if various candidates are being considered for an entry-level clerical position in a larger human rights organization. If, on the other hand, a project coordinator is being sought in a relatively small organization, involving the staff in the process will help generate good will in the office and create shared responsibility for the final decision. Other organizations share responsibility for recruiting and hiring with the board of directors.

Where recruits are to be found depends on the nature of the organization. Organizations which are unable to operate

openly are most likely to recruit by discrete word of mouth. Groups whose activities are not restricted by hostile governments, however, may generate interest by publicizing their existence, objectives and a description of the group's activities. Specific staff openings can also be advertised in the media. Members, volunteers, staff and board alike may also be recruited from local civic and community-based organizations; local businesses; religious institutions; universities, professional associations; former clientele; management institutions; other NGOs and a host of other entities about which we have not heard. Groups sometimes fill staff and board positions internally with volunteers and/or members who possess the skills needed and have already shown exceptional service and a sustained track record in human rights work. It is particularly common in membership organizations for the board to be elected in a general assembly of the membership.

ESTABLISHING METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Why are Methodical Procedures Important?

Methodical procedures are important because they have a direct impact on an organization's ability to be efficient, trustworthy and credible—prerequisites for their effective functioning. Will community members trust the efforts of a rights organization with a reputation for being perpetually disorganized and in turmoil? Can an activist ever again completely trust the documentation of a colleague after discovering his or her case file was carelessly put together? Can donors trust NGOs which submit incomplete financial reports with missing receipts? Human rights workers and groups need to be methodical in their work because they risk discrediting their efforts if they are not.

Most human rights organizations are started with only a few members. In the earliest phase of a new group's life, its initiators may not even have an office, but they are generally in constant contact, working jointly on getting the organization off the ground. At this stage, it may seem unnecessary to develop formal procedures. Because the group is so small, everyone knows what everyone else is doing, and there is so little physical information (documents, letters, etc.) that it seems a waste of time to worry about where or how it should be stored.

As a group grows and accumulates data, however, the absence of specified procedures can lead to disorganization, as time is wasted looking for documents, duplicating the work of colleagues, etc. Although it may seem fine for the three initiators of a group without an office to carry out their work according to their own individual systems, multiple systems make communication and access to each other's work difficult, and set a precedent which may be hard to reverse as the organization grows. The establishment of office procedures can be particularly important for overburdened and understaffed human rights groups which typically handle and generate sensitive information. Although it takes a little time to create such

procedures, in the long run, efficiency is enhanced and conflicts over how things should be done minimized.

What kind of Procedures should be Considered?

The nature of each group's procedures and which ones it decides to employ will depend on its unique structure and mandate. Although it is impossible to suggest specific procedures that will be relevant to all groups, we thought it might be helpful to highlight some of the areas which typically benefit from systemization. The following list is a modified version of an Amnesty International memo entitled "Organizational Matters":

1. Incoming materials:
 - a) Who deals with what?
 - b) What is the procedure for opening/registering/handling the different categories of materials (correspondence, newspapers, requests for help)?
2. Outgoing materials:
 - a) What outgoing materials need to be approved beforehand? (i.e. what are the rules regarding press releases; letters to government officials, board of directors or membership; campaign documentation, etc.);
 - b) Who gets copies of what?
 - c) Where are copies of outgoing materials filed?
 - d) Is there any standard format for letters, documents, etc.?
3. Storage and retrieval of information:
 - a) Where are press clippings, case files, statistics, information on abuses, background information, employee and fundraising information, etc. filed and by whom?
 - b) Are there any general guidelines regarding information storage and retrieval? (i.e. centralized or decentralized, chronological with most recent documents at the front or the back of the file, etc.);
 - c) Will specific issue or project files be kept?
 - d) Where will the files be located and who will have access to them?
4. Financial Procedures:
 - a) Who is authorized to sign checks? Are there maximum amounts?
 - b) Who is authorized to make purchases? How is this done? Is prior approval necessary?
 - c) How are incoming funds handled?
 - d) How can petty cash reimbursement be claimed? What petty cash expenditures are justifiable?
 - e) How are salaries paid?
 - f) How will the budget be monitored and by whom?
5. Employee procedures:
 - a) How will staff, board, members, etc. be recruited and by whom? Are there any special considerations such as minority status? What will be the conditions of service?
 - b) Under what conditions can a member of the staff or board be removed? Are warnings necessary?
- c) Will staff performance be regularly reviewed? According to what criteria and how often?
- d) Who will handle employee grievances and how?
- e) How will the staff, board and membership be kept apprised of each others activities? (i.e. regular or periodic mailings, newsletters, annual meetings, staff meetings, etc.);
- f) What vacation and sick day policies will be instituted?
- g) How will a prolonged absence (due to illness, family emergency, etc.) from the organization be dealt with?
6. Other procedures:
 - a) How will requests or information that do not directly pertain to your mandate be handled?
 - b) If the information you handle is sensitive or you are working in a hostile environment, what security precautions need to be taken?

A few of these items are worth highlighting. First, careful record-keeping is a must for any human rights organization. Since efforts to discredit human rights work are frequently made, keeping accurate records of signed agreements, receipts, correspondence, interview notes, on-going project and case files, etc. can help an organization demonstrate its transactions and track record. A rational filing system to keep track of these records and other materials should be organized from the start, even if your materials are stored in cardboard boxes. The filing system should be logically organized for the easiest possible retrieval of documents so that the information each person files is accessible to all relevant parties. The system of documentation and filing should be imparted to all staff so that the chance of mis-filing and misplacing information is minimized.

Second, regular staff meetings are a good vehicle for assisting the free flow of information within an organization and are especially important to organizations where staff are working semi-independently on a number of different projects or have people working in the field. Some human rights organizations reported holding staff meetings at the beginning of every work day, but most groups hold them weekly, twice a month, or monthly. Attendance is usually mandatory unless someone has a pressing reason for missing the meeting. The meetings permit staff to inform one another about the range of activities going on within an organization at any given time. They also provide a forum for feedback and on-going evaluation and comment by those not intimately involved in a particular activity. Agendas set for the coming weeks are modified after they have been exposed to the full staff. One activist noted that a key use of these meetings is to allow those outside a project to objectively assess how realistic its deadlines are. Management may also be required to give a report at staff meetings, and decisions may need to be taken by those present.

Staff meetings are also good for diffusing built-up tensions. Views and complaints can get a public airing if necessary, although opportunities might also be provided for staff members to speak to the executive director privately in cases where disclosure at a staff meeting would not be appropriate.

On the more positive side, staff meetings offer an excellent opportunity for management to extend public encouragement and plaudits, and to reinforce the theme of teamwork. Any temptation to offer negative assessments, however, should be tempered with the knowledge that public criticism can easily be demoralizing rather than constructive.

Few of the human rights organizations surveyed did formal staff performance appraisals, but a number of non-executive level staff reported that employees whose work or demeanor was considered sub-standard were sometimes "pushed out of the organization". Often these employees were fired or forced to quit without ever having been told that or how their performance was lacking, or warned that their job was in jeopardy. Life at the organization was simply made miserable for them. Such experiences generally left the former employee angry and resentful, and affected the morale of the rest of the staff, which wondered when it might be subject to the same treatment. Ultimately, an organization's reputation and credibility will be hurt if disaffected employees decide to tell their stories (or worse) to funders, fellow human rights groups, etc. Some disaffected employees start their own human rights groups which can expand the tension once confined to individuals to two organizations. Needless to say, this kind of tension drains an organization's energy for doing human rights work.

Naturally, there are legitimate reasons to ask staff members to leave. If someone shows a lack of competence or commitment, repeatedly exhibits bad judgment, leaks information to hostile groups or alienates his/her co-workers or clients, something must be done. If it is done fairly, however, resentment and anger will be minimized, organizational morale will not be sacrificed and the group's reputation will remain intact. Clear and specific descriptions of what is expected of each person in the organization and periodic employee performance appraisals let everyone know where they stand, what they can expect, and how things will be dealt with if a problem identified fails to improve. Job descriptions and performance appraisals should be given in writing to avoid any miscommunication or convenient misinterpretation.

Most organizations which do performance appraisals say they serve as early warning systems and are crucial to heading off problems before they become too serious. Although some groups do staff evaluations twice a year or even quarterly, most do them annually. Developing a policy ahead of time for certain key matters, however, is critical to establishing a fair performance appraisal procedure. These include how often employee appraisals will be done, how unsatisfactory evaluations will be dealt with, what right an employee receiving a negative evaluation has to appeal it, whether salaries and promotions will be tied to evaluations, whether several warnings are necessary before someone can be fired, and whether there are infractions (such as breach of security or unethical behavior) that automatically result in removal even without a warning.

Some groups supplement or substitute the formal employee appraisal with other procedures designed to evaluate employees' work. One human rights organization required staff to write

brief monthly reports about their work which were submitted directly to the executive director instead of to his or her department or project coordinators. This procedure gave the executive director an added perspective that was not filtered through the accounts of project coordinators on the progress of projects, and permitted him to evaluate the supervisors' work based on the perspective of those they supervised. Other organizations have used peer review mechanisms (described in Chapter 12: Evaluation) and self evaluation procedures.

One final point about establishing clearly defined procedures: with larger organizations, it can be very helpful to develop a manual outlining all procedures so that staff can easily refer to it and new members can quickly orient themselves. The process of preparing a manual can also bring to light areas where no procedures exist but may need to be devised. Ideally, the staff itself should be involved in the discussion and approval of the procedures outlined in an office manual because then they will feel invested in their implementation. In addition, it is a good idea to periodically review and, if appropriate, revise the procedures enumerated in the manual to make sure that they are making the office more efficient rather than simply more bureaucratized.

CONSOLIDATING AND SUSTAINING HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

In addition to recruiting the right people and establishing clearly defined roles for an organization's constituent bodies, three components were cited over and over again by human rights groups as being essential to organizational health:

1. Internal democracy and accountability
2. Effective leadership
3. Teamwork

These inter-related components in large part determine the quality of the working environment within the organization—the manner in which staff members communicate with each other, and how motivated and empowered they feel. It is impossible to fully separate the discussion of these three components, since effective leadership fosters internal democracy and teamwork, and internal democracy and teamwork tend to nurture and expand leadership.

Internal Democracy and Accountability

Organizational styles of governance fall somewhere on a spectrum between the "hands off" and "autocratic" approaches, with "democratic" somewhere in between. In the "hands off" approach, leadership is essentially avoided. The executive director of an organization feels uncomfortable making demands and is more interested in the staff liking him or her. This type of director tends to avoid problems and let members of the staff fend for themselves. Such a decentralized system might at first look democratic. However, without clearly defined leadership roles in place among the staff, and a clear and unified vision for the organization, members of the organization are likely to work at cross purposes without coordination or mechanisms for sorting out conflicts when they arise. Especially in new groups, when staff may feel a keen desire for leadership at the top, they may feel cheated of the guidance and mentoring they expected. Thus, the hands off approach can lead to chaos, internal strife and paralysis, prematurely grinding an organization to a halt.

At the other end of the spectrum, the autocratic model usually involves one person who wields absolute authority. Goals and standards may be kept largely to him or herself, enhancing the exercise of unilateral decision-making power. The autocratic leader generally keeps his or her eye on every detail, regardless of its importance, in an effort to control all aspects of the organization's functioning. Everyone is completely dependent on his or her judgment and go-ahead.

A few activists with whom we talked felt that semi-autocratic methods were appropriate at certain points in the life of a human rights organization. Two examples were cited: 1) when decision-making in conditions of externally imposed crisis must be rapid and process appears less important than results; and 2) when new organizations need to show results quickly in order to attract external funding. Many activists responded to this, however, by admitting that while decision-making might have to be streamlined in emergencies, this was no excuse for

avoiding democratic procedures in an organization's day to day operations. While more sympathetic to the need to develop a quick track record to attract funding, many groups felt that autocratic leadership often makes an organization less efficient and can actually harm its track record. Groups would be better advised, they maintained, to make the effort to persuade funders that attention to process should be considered an aspect of a group's track record. As one activist pointed out:

How we get results is of utmost importance. It is actually practical to be a democratic organization because the organization will last in the long-run. It is an effort, but also an investment for the future.

Many human rights organizations unwittingly fall into the autocratic mode. Too often, the larger autocratic society in which a group operates is replicated in its internal structure and practices. (Why so many human rights organizations based in democratic countries function autocratically is less understandable.) The problems with this model of governance, however, were enumerated by many human rights activists. In an autocratic system:

1. There are fewer checks and balances which can lead to a crisis of accountability;
2. The success or failure of the organization rests entirely with its leader. A crisis that leaves the organization leaderless can immobilize it. Examples include the arrest of an organization's leader by authorities, or his or her sudden resignation. During the hiatus while the affected organization "regroups," it may be unable to fulfill its commitments to either the local community it serves or the donors to whom it must deliver timely reports. During such a transition, a group may lose much of its momentum and credibility;
3. Bad judgment calls are more likely. For example, one activist recounted a situation where an executive director refused to delegate responsibility for oversight of local projects to coordinators, adding it instead to his already sizable duties of general administration. Though the director had particular standards as to how he felt projects should be conducted, he was unable to accurately gauge performance in the field from the distance of the head office. When he made criticisms based on misunderstanding and imperfect information, he generated ill will and frustration from the field staff. After a number of decisions reflecting poor judgment, and much acrimony, the staff revolted and a number of coordinator positions was created and filled. In another case, the prominent executive director of a rights group formed during the last years of a dictatorship decided to run for a high public office once the regime fell and multiparty elections were scheduled. When he resisted handing in his resignation, despite the fear by other members of the group that the organization was being pulled into partisan politics, the staff effectively compelled him to do so by convening an emergency conference of the entire membership to choose a new leader.

Thus, autocratic leadership may be resisted and ultimately overturned by the staff;

4. Those who assume full responsibility for leadership tasks are likely to feel burdened, overwhelmed and resentful, despite their insistence on such a system;
5. Because the leader is overwhelmed, the functioning of the organization may actually become less efficient as decisions are deferred until s/he can get around to addressing them;
6. Staff have no ability to be creative or responsible, and have little control over their work despite the fact that they may be held accountable for it in the community being served.

The existence of one or several of these problems invariably leads to resentment, low morale, decreasing productivity and higher turnover. Although participation in the decision-making process on program-related matters (as opposed to administrative ones) may need to be limited to those people within the organization who are fully familiar with its mandate and human rights concepts, stripping staff members of the right to participate in decisions that affect them almost always results in the kind of employee dissatisfaction and internal strife that, as with the "hands off" method, inhibit organizational effectiveness.

Democratic governance, on the other hand, supports consultation and broad participation in policy and decision-making, even if the executive director and/or board have the final say. In the democratic model, staff are accountable to each other as well as to the executive director, and the executive director is accountable to the staff, board and membership. This is done by insisting on responsiveness and transparency from executive director and staff alike, and by establishing mechanisms for effective redress. By all accounts, building a truly democratic organization is a difficult (though extremely worthwhile) process, especially if its members have little personal or societal experience with democratic governance. The following questions posed by rights activists may help you determine the level of internal democracy within your organization¹³:

1. Is the distribution of authority among as many people as possible? Are the responsibilities and powers of everyone in the organization clearly delimited? Are the people in authority accountable to those who selected them to do the work?
2. Is there rotation among those chairing meetings or heading projects or even, if possible, of those leading the organization? (Some groups made persuasive arguments for electing officers even within the staff itself to ensure accountability and encourage the rotation of posts, thus strengthening and broadening the group's base. Several groups noted that responsibilities held too long by one

person could come to be seen as that person's property and would not be easily relinquished in the future);

3. How are decisions made, and is this process clear to everyone?
4. Who plays a part in choosing the group's leadership?
5. How many leaders are there?
6. Are there mechanisms that allow people in the organization to question the leadership? To what extent can minority opinions be expressed? Are there provisions for appeals against unpopular decisions?
7. Have mechanisms been established for the staff and board to have direct access to each other (i.e. not through the executive director)? In some rights groups, a staff representative actually sits on the board. In other cases, some mechanism is created for the anonymous provision of concrete information to the board to prevent the executive director from painting an unrealistically rosy picture of the organization's affairs;
8. Is the lack of political and social equality in society mirrored in the organization? Are women and minority members of the organization fully participating or are they marginalized? To what extent do leaders want to change inequalities?
9. Are tasks allocated according to rational criteria?
10. Is there equal access to the material resources needed by the group, as well as to skills and knowledge? Is information made available and disseminated to everyone on a regular basis? (This applies to the flow of information within the staff, as well as between the staff and board. Circulating written reports on staff meetings to the board and vice versa, and making sure the staff knows about all board and staff meetings will contribute to the transparency vital to democratic governance);
11. To what extent are those who use the services of the organization included on the staff?
12. When important visitors arrive at the organization's office, are they encouraged to talk to members of the staff other than the leadership?
13. Are regular opportunities provided for staff to gather and evaluate their efforts, as well as those of the leadership?

Fostering accountability on the part of the staff as a whole to its membership and board may entail some further mechanisms. Many organizations speak the rhetoric, but offer only the appearance of accountability. Staff members are regularly consulted at staff meetings and structures such as complaint committees and review boards function in a formal way. Their conclusions and recommendations, however, are ignored. The same is often true of boards which, although intended as checks on the staff, frequently simply rubber-stamp all proposals submitted by the executive director. Regular communication with and information flow to the membership and board of directors is critical to avoiding this skin-deep accountability. If the board and membership are informed, they will be in a position to effectively evaluate the decisions and work of the staff.

13. Some of these questions were generated by women's rights activists at a training workshop held in November 1993 in Asmara, Eritrea. The workshop was co-sponsored by the National Union of Eritrean Women and the Fund for Peace Women's Program.

Other mechanisms for ensuring accountability are found in membership organizations which give their members voting privileges at annual general meetings. In such a scenario, members may serve as a check on staff and board authority by virtue of electing and removing officers whose performance they find unsatisfactory, by voting on policy directly, or some combination of the two. Some organizations assign each member an equal vote; others allow only delegates of the membership voting rights. Still others allow all members to vote, but weight the ballots of certain, more active members.

Groups should be aware, however, that mechanisms for ensuring internal democracy and accountability, such as membership voting, can be subverted to achieve undemocratic ends. For example, several Middle Eastern groups were subjected to "hostile takeovers" when, just prior to an annual meeting of their general assemblies, a number of new members with a particular political point of view were specially recruited to skew the election results. The electoral victories of these newly and artificially bolstered factions resulted in the politicization of the organizations, as well as a fundamental change in their activities and vision. Such situations can be avoided by applying strict criteria to the recruitment of members, staff and board, including a shared vision of the organization's mandate and methods for achieving it, and a commitment to impartiality (see Chapter 6: Recruiting).

Leadership

In most cases, the leader of a group tends to be one of its founders who has assumed the position of executive director. This is most often the person with the vision, commitment and ability to inspire and mobilize people necessary to get the group off the ground. But organizations cannot ultimately rely on the talents and skills of one person alone. Leadership is ideally shared by a number of people within an organization, delineated according to people's specific talents and areas of responsibility. A good leader will be committed to building an institution that can outlast him or her. To do this, s/he must be willing to develop other leaders within the organization. As two experts on leadership put it:

Effective leaders formulate and articulate a clear picture, a vision of where the organization is headed and of what is important. In achieving this mission, making the vision a reality, the leader builds trust and commitment and is the architect of coalitions of support for the vision. Through the exemplary deployment of his or her own talents, and the nurturing and development of the talents of others, this leader seeks to lead by vision, inspiration and the empowerment of others.¹⁴

Leadership doesn't always mean taking charge. One can lead by setting an example, by helping to settle differences or

by introducing new ideas. Groups need to identify all the leadership tasks, and divide them. In larger human rights organizations, there may be several layers of leadership. For example, some organizations have executive directors with ultimate authority for all staff and programs housed by the organization; a deputy director for programs who oversees the substantive work of the entire organization; a deputy director of administrative affairs who oversees the administrative and financial matters of the entire organization; project coordinators who are leaders in their particular projects; and additional coordinators for functions such as public relations, fundraising, volunteer coordination, etc.

Some organizations are able to create a leadership role for every member of their organization including the receptionist and secretary. They do this by exploring the full range of leadership possibilities, and appreciating the talents of staff that are often overlooked because they do not relate directly to human rights know-how. For example, a receptionist or secretary could play a leadership role in developing an office procedures manual, and in training new staff members and volunteers in administrative matters. A particularly committed volunteer might be asked to play a role in recruiting and coordinating other volunteers. Perhaps a staff member or volunteer has a special talent for making people feel welcome or comfortable—they could be given leadership responsibilities with new recruits, or assigned to take care of special visitors such as guest speakers or visiting donors, board members and others who may require special attention.

Leadership capabilities among staff members can also be cultivated by the provision of skills and knowledge-building training opportunities. Many human rights groups emphasized that the chance to attend training workshops and seminars should not be monopolized by a few people at the head of an organization. Developing the skills of staff members will make them more interested in the job and more committed to the organization. According to many rights activists, training should be periodic, whether it is in basic administrative and computer skills or in techniques for paralegal work, human rights education, data collection and investigative reporting, or advocacy and mass mobilization. Some groups advocated sending staff away for training so that they would not be distracted by day-to-day office crises. Others lamented the fact that much of the training offered in the field of human rights is based in the North. They felt that it was best to seek opportunities to share experience with like-minded organizations operating in countries with working environments more similar to their own. Still others emphasized the value of on-site training—whether by local experts or foreigners—because it allows groups to acquire practical skills in their home environment; reduces the alienation that can be caused by witnessing the disparity of resources between the North and South; reduces the blind emulation of other groups' methods of operating; and reduces the incidence of the earlier mentioned "brain drain" phenomenon.

Developing open and varied channels of communication within the organization is essential both to being a good leader, and to fostering leadership in others. Leaders on all levels can

14. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*, Harper & Row, New York, 1985.

instill in staff the sense that their opinions are important by regularly seeking advice or information from them. This lets the staff know that their expertise is recognized, and may lead those consulted to take more initiative in the future. By the same token, staff should feel that leaders—from project coordinators on up—are accessible and will deal honestly and directly with them. When there are problems, effective leaders are willing to confront them and look for enduring solutions rather than quick fixes.

As mentioned above and in other sections, devising a staff and volunteer reward system can pay off in the form of increased motivation, productivity and leadership tendencies. This is especially important in the highly pressured and sometimes dangerous human rights field that is notorious for its high burn-out rate. Are you recognizing and celebrating the contributions of your staff, volunteers, and, if relevant, members? Have specific mechanisms for recognizing and celebrating hard work and dedication been developed? Few human rights groups with whom we spoke do this, but those which do swear by its importance. Recognition ranged from private or public praise, to written letters of thanks for valuable service and stellar work performance evaluations, to employee-of-the-month awards and promotions. Other types of rewards included things like access to office equipment during non-office hours, mandatory compensatory time to avoid burn-out, training to develop specific human rights skills, and opportunities to travel. Those employing reward systems, however, emphasized the importance of keeping the level of praise appropriate to the achievement, and avoiding rewards that seem more designed to exclude those not receiving them than to recognize those who are.

Activists reported a number of additional attributes that the multiple leaders of a human rights NGO should strive to collectively possess:

1. Knowledge about their subject area;
2. The ability to build consensus;
3. The ability to encourage innovation and risk-taking;
4. The ability to be organized;
5. The willingness to solicit feedback on a regular basis;
6. Sensitivity to the preoccupations of staff and membership;
7. Flexibility;
8. Diplomacy;
9. Self control;
10. The ability to deliver criticism constructively. (In human rights groups where people are typically working under duress because of their workload and the environment in which they operate, nerves may be frayed and frustration may be high. Too often, public expressions of exasperation directed at staff are blurted out by leaders who feel additionally burdened by their colleague's failure to complete a task or do it properly. Though understandable, such a reaction will almost always cause the accused to feel humiliated and demoralized. Criticism should be done in private, and specific charges and concrete examples of poor performance should be offered. Those being criticized

should then have an opportunity to give their side of the story and any possible extenuating circumstances before any further reprimand);

11. Good judgment about when and how to say no. (Most human rights groups are over committed given their resource and staff limitations. Your organization will suffer if the leadership is spread too thin, serving on numerous boards or coalitions, serving as consultants to international organizations, etc).

Few people possess all of these abilities and qualities, so organizations need to prioritize them according to the nature of their mandate and internal structure, and assemble a staff that collectively possesses as many of them as possible. These lists should not discourage or overwhelm; they are ideals that few of us reach, but striving for them makes our organizations run more smoothly and efficiently.

Teamwork

If internal democracy, accountability and effective leadership are in place, good teamwork is sure to follow. Teamwork thrives in an environment of collaboration rather than competition. All members of the organization, though they may be working in different areas, are willing to help out in other areas as necessary because they recognize that they have a stake in the success of the organization as a whole.

Unfortunately, a competitive rather than collaborative spirit plagues many larger human rights groups with multiple projects. It is easy for those working on a project to feel that theirs is the most vital to the organization. Competition between project leaders within the same organization often develops for funding, greater recognition from leadership and peers, and/or greater control over decision-making. Unchecked competitive attitudes can lead to communication breakdowns, as information is hoarded to maximize control over "private domains" and people no longer feel that they can rely on each other. Solidarity may even break down to the extent that activists begin to give priority to, and stress to outsiders the importance of, their own particular program over the rights group itself. The integrity and future of the whole organization may be jeopardized as trust evaporates.

A human rights group can avoid such a situation by ensuring that all projects and the organization itself are designed to necessitate teamwork. Teamwork is facilitated by many of the same mechanisms cited earlier in connection with developing internal democracy and good leadership:

1. Enthusiasm and a sense of belonging are usually prerequisite to building team spirit. Persons exercising leadership within an organization can help foster a positive group dynamic from the beginning by: taking an interest in staff workers as people and not just as human rights activists; exercising tolerance and understanding and offering constructive criticism when staff make mistakes; treating staff

with equal respect no matter what their position; and providing for equal access and opportunity for development among staff members;

2. Employee opinions and ideas should be regularly solicited and the maximum number of staff possible should be included in discussions and decision-making;
3. Compartmentalization should be avoided from the start. Everybody working within or associated with a human rights group should have a shared understanding and unified position on the overall mission and work of the organization. For this to happen, it may be necessary to periodically review the goals and objectives of the group. It is easy to lose sight of your founding principles when you are caught up in the day-to-day work, so there needs to be a continuous process of verification that everyone shares the same values and agenda;
4. All staff and in some cases volunteers should be informed on a regular basis (for example through staff meetings) as to what various projects are doing, and informal networking within the organization should be stressed as strengthening everyone's work;
5. Care in the recruitment process should be taken to hire activists with complementary skills and talents so that they have a personal interest in collaborating;
6. Human rights organizations should, to the maximum extent possible, reflect expertise, high levels of responsibility, and commitment in the salary and benefits given to staff so no one feels that his or her effort is unrecognized or undervalued;
7. Conflicts that arise between staff members should be immediately and openly addressed, encouraging compromise and cooperation.

In sum, staff and volunteers may need to be reminded periodically that everyone has a shared stake in the success of both the entire organization and its individual components.

CREDIBILITY

The credibility—trustworthiness and reliability—of a human rights organization will in large part determine its effectiveness. Human rights groups which lack credibility will not be taken seriously, and may find themselves more vulnerable to attack by hostile governments or other forces. A reputation for credibility is something that a human rights group earns over time as relevant actors develop confidence in its conduct. An organization may in fact feel that it is credible, but if those outside the organization do not perceive it that way, the group's ability to obtain information, mobilize support, etc. will be weakened. Unfortunately, some organizations only come to realize that they have failed to establish credibility in the outside world—or lost it—when they experience the consequences of a loss of faith: a fall-off in funding; a lack of interest by international NGOs in its documentation; or a disinclination by other local NGOs to cooperate with it through networking and common participation in campaigns.

We have already discussed in preceding chapters a number of the components of credibility which build confidence in an organization including: a realistic mandate (chapter 2); the careful selection of human rights workers—especially the executive director (Chapter 6); consultation with the community(ies) to be served (chapter 2); organized procedures (Chapter 7); and internal democracy and accountability (Chapter 8). In addition, credibility in the human rights field requires:

1. Accuracy of information:

Documentation is the foundation of all human rights activity whether the research/data is used to organize citizen pressure; persuade government or others to adopt a particular policy or cease an abusive practice; observe trials; provide a service such as legal aid, food or medicine; or educate about human rights. When a human rights group documents and publicizes human rights conditions, it is critical that it make certain of the veracity of its sources of information. The cost in credibility to a group which fails to confirm rumors or allegations before relaying them to the world, or embellishes the details of rights violations to make the case against a violator more vivid, is very high. This is true even when it is done in the service of ending violations that are very real. By contrast, disseminating accurate information bolsters a rights group's credibility because the group develops a reputation in the human rights, international and media communities as a source of dependable information.

Sometimes, however, groups make mistakes. Generally, a human rights organization which publicly admits a mistake immediately upon discovering it will not lose credibility, so long as mistakes are the exception rather than the rule. (For additional sources on this important topic, please turn to the "fact-finding" bibliography in Appendix B.)

2. Independence, impartiality and objectivity:

To be credible, a human rights organization must strictly adhere to its human rights agenda, no matter whose political interests that agenda is likely to serve or harm. Since being regarded as independent, impartial and objective is essential to establishing credibility, avoiding the appearance (or reality) of serving the interests of either the state or opposition parties is of critical importance. GONGOs, or governmentally-created "non-governmental organizations," are usually recognized for what they are: organs set up to shield a government from, rather than promote, accountability in the area of human rights. Governments may create agencies such as human rights commissions, ombudsman offices, and so on which play a legitimate role in monitoring human rights and regulating government behavior, but these are government agencies, not human rights organizations. Opposition parties may also create human rights offices to collect information on abuses to be used as ammunition against government candidates in an election campaign, but these offices are political departments, not human rights organizations, as their primary purpose is propaganda.

The question of credibility is particularly sensitive when human rights NGOs are founded, for example, by a group of government employees wishing to promote human rights education, or by former rebel leaders whose movement is now in power. Can such groups be independent given their close ties to a current government? In the case of groups that are truly committed to being impartial, despite the past or present affiliations of their members, the answer is yes—in the long run. Such groups, however, will have a much harder time establishing credibility in certain quarters because of their strong association with officialdom. This kind of linkage poses the greatest problem for groups intending to monitor the behavior of their old friends or current employers.

Maintaining impartiality is not the same as being apolitical. Human rights activities do have a political impact, both intentional and unintentional, and may involve participation in the broader political process. Demonstrations and other forms of active dissent against abusive government policies are sometimes necessary. Such actions do not compromise impartiality so long as their purpose is not to exploit the cause in question on behalf of the government's political opponents and their agenda. The challenge, then, is to prevent even politicized human rights activity from being transformed into partisan activity. (The line between political and partisan might be crossed, for example, if the president of a rights group decides to maintain his or her position while simultaneously standing for political office. Alternatively, a human rights group might be co-opted on behalf of those with partisan aims by the infiltration of political activists whose agenda is to make the group an appendage of their political movement.)

We found some disagreement among groups as to whether it is advisable to endorse or actively promote a particular candidate or political party that is human rights-friendly, or has actually included human rights principles or policies in its political platform. Some activists argue that in polarized societies where neutrality is virtually unknown, a group could lose credibility by not endorsing a particular party or candidate. And in cases where a political race consists of one candidate with a past record of dictatorial rule and human rights abuses while the other candidate spent time in prison for her human rights activism, a human rights organization's reputation could be discredited by failing to show open support for one of its own. At the same time, it would be ludicrous for human rights activists to avoid demonstrations demanding the overthrow of a leader who has abused human rights when they ought to be in the forefront!

The majority of older, more experienced groups surveyed, however, argue that it is *never* appropriate for a human rights group to align itself with a political party. Among other things, such alignments make it difficult to criticize the human rights practices of a group's affiliated party or leader. Rather, human rights groups should express enthusiastic support for the particular program or policy advocated by that party. To be seen promoting or campaigning for a particular candidate—no matter how consistent his or her party platform is with the objectives of the human rights community—could compromise a

group's reputation for neutrality and raise doubts about the group's priorities. Is politics being used in the service of human rights or is human rights being used in the service of politics? In addition, those unsympathetic to the party in question for reasons unrelated to human rights could be alienated by such a party affiliation.

Though groups must never be neutral when it comes to human rights, most felt that it was best to support or protest policies and practices, rather than individuals or parties. If, for example, a political group seeks a permit from the government to hold a peaceful demonstration, and that permit is denied, human rights organizations should protest the inhibition of freedom of association and expression, while taking no position on the merits of the political group or its agenda. If, however, the political group fails to request the required permit, human rights organizations should stress that all groups are bound by the rule of law.

In addition to establishing a group's independence from political entities, it is equally important to avoid favoritism with specific ethnic, religious or linguistic groups (unless the organization's mandate is to address discrimination against those groups in particular). It is also important for a group to establish its independence from donors, making certain that those who make contributions understand that they have not purchased any rights to intervene in policy or decision-making. This is true in the case of foreign foundations and government-sponsors, as well as wealthy local sponsors.

Just as human rights groups must be willing to criticize violations no matter who the perpetrators are, they should also give credit where credit is due to any entity responsible for an improvement in human rights conditions. To be credible, a human rights group must be objective, applying the same standards of human rights (international, as well as domestic if they are high) to a new and promising government as it did to a previous abusive regime.

The perception that an organization is objective will be enhanced by the avoidance of rhetoric when publicly condemning a government's human rights record. Some human rights groups, seeking to ensure that the public understands the full extent of the abuses, infuse their reports and public statements with editorial remarks. Sentences like "the fascist, racist, dictatorial military regime has committed unparalleled and egregious atrocities against the defenseless and innocent citizens of..." can sound more like propaganda than statements of fact. Though the desire to convey indignation over the violations cited is natural, it leaves no room for the target audience to develop their own sense of outrage. Usually the information is most powerful when simply stated; the facts speak for themselves.

This does not mean, however, that the only credible approach for a monitoring organization is to publicly condemn the every move of an undemocratic regime. Often "quiet diplomacy" has the greatest potential to influence official behavior. Such an approach can allow governments a "face saving" opportunity to correct a policy or action antithetical to

human rights. Additional benefits may be derived from this "constructive" approach if it makes it more difficult for a regime to dismiss human rights groups as frivolous or label their members as subversives. Nonetheless, credibility can suffer if an organization's constituency mistakes the "constructive approach" for inactivity or imagines that a group has been co-opted by the government. The potential for such misunderstanding underscores the importance of groups educating their constituencies from the outset about the variety of strategies, including "quiet diplomacy," that can be usefully employed to achieve their objectives, and the advantages of each of these strategies. If it is possible to inform constituencies that certain issues have been privately raised with government authorities without compromising any "quiet deals" made, this also will help dispel doubts about a group's integrity.

Finally, objectivity requires that the treatment by groups of their clients, informants, target populations for education, etc. be guided by the universal standards embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Groups which seem to stereotype a particular ethnic group, treat Christians differently from Muslims, take women less seriously than men, etc. are not objective, and their prejudices will harm credibility by causing a loss of confidence among the affected communities. Further, even accurate information generated by a biased group may be seen as tainted and therefore unreliable.

3. Accountability:

A human rights organization is accountable when it is answerable for its actions to the communities it was established to serve, the national and international communities that may receive information from it, and its funders. Is the organization doing what it said it would do? How efficient is the organization in carrying out its programs? Is it working as diligently as possible given local circumstances? Are its decisions prudent? How responsive is the organization to the concerns of its constituencies? Organizations which do less than they promised or undertake activities altogether different from their original representation, are likely to lose credibility as their word comes to be regarded as untrustworthy.

Accountability also requires NGOs to take responsibility for any unintended consequences of their work. Groups which do not try to anticipate the range of consequences that may flow from their projects or campaigns may cause unintended problems for their target populations. Take, for example, a group which spends considerable energy educating a community about a specific health problem and solution, but fails to first obtain the support of the traditional village healer. The people of the village have for years been dying from a disease which they now learn could have been prevented simply by filtering water through a cheese cloth. They are furious at the village healer, whom they believe has withheld this valuable information from them all this time, and drive him out of town. The village healer, however, has played a vital psychological and spiritual role in the community, and his fall from grace deprives the village of vital services on which it has tradition-

ally depended. The NGO has therefore remedied one problem but caused another.

Likewise, if an NGO's agitation on behalf of an abused group is unable to garner the hoped-for protection from the international community, but causes the authorities to further repress the group, the NGO may be held accountable for failing both to warn the group of the possible consequences of their involvement, and to prepare it sufficiently for the authorities' reaction. Careful analysis prior to the implementation of a campaign or project will help prevent situations where the "cure" is worse than the "disease".

Financial accountability requires an organization to utilize its funds efficiently and exclusively in the service of its institutional objectives, maintain detailed financial records, and submit timely and regular reports according to its donor agreements. Organizations which consistently send in late and/or incomplete reports may harm future funding when their reputation for sloppy reporting spreads to other donors.

4. Commitment and Perseverance:

Another measure of credibility is the level of commitment groups are perceived as having toward their various causes, and whether they are trusted to sustain dedication to the work over time. Human rights groups that jump on the bandwagon when certain human rights issues are in vogue but drop them the minute they fall from public consciousness will not be regarded as credible. By contrast, a group that seriously pursues its objectives will earn some measure of credibility even if its objectives are not fully achieved. A human rights group's commitment to the work may also be measured by the extent to which it practices what it preaches. Does the leadership of the organization respect the human rights of the staff? Do staff working at the grassroots level show respect to members of the community traditionally denied it?

The seriousness of a group's commitment may also be judged by its willingness to stand up for itself. If, for example, the government seizes the publications of a particular rights organization, the group must be willing to risk the further wrath of authorities by taking action designed to effect the return of its materials. Groups which fail to stand up to the government when their own rights are violated will not be trusted to stand up for the rights of others.

5. Inclusiveness:

We have already discussed the importance for credibility of making certain that the community that is the object of a human rights group's help participates meaningfully in the planning and implementation of the group's projects. Particularly when the group's activists are largely or wholly members of the elite, this will help close the cultural gap that can lead to misunderstandings which undermine well-intentioned work. We have also noted the desirability of groups actually including members of the targeted community(ies) on their staff and board.

As mentioned in the context of objectivity above, credibility is also enhanced when groups work equitably on behalf of all groups found within the region covered by their mandate. If, for example, an organization monitors abuses in a particular region, it should show equal concern for abuses committed against all groups. Organizations providing health services or legal aid should not neglect certain ethnic or religious groups in favor of others. Even though the victims of rights violations may overwhelmingly belong to one particular social group, the very universality of human rights suggests that rights organizations should avoid confining their assistance to such groups unless they can demonstrate that no others' rights are being similarly violated. The exception, as noted earlier, is when organizational mandates specifically cater to certain vulnerable groups such as women, children or minorities, for whom past or current discrimination has been or is so disproportionate as to justify singular attention.

6. Transparency:

Transparency, or the willingness to open one's organization to scrutiny, is another component of credibility. When an organization is willing to divulge its financial dealings, research or project methodologies, and internal procedures (including how it makes decisions and why certain decisions were made), it sends a message to its potential critics that it is confident in its undertakings and has nothing to hide.

7. Realism:

Human rights groups that promise to end abuses, raise the human rights consciousness of all sectors of society or cure environmental ills are going to raise expectations that they cannot fulfill and lose credibility in the process. These are goals, not realistic objectives that can be achieved in the two to three year time-frame during which observers may be willing to reserve judgment. Though it is appropriate for a statement of mandate to include these extremely long-term goals, organizations must emphasize to their constituencies the shorter-term objectives they believe they can actually accomplish—and then they must accomplish them, or at least make significant progress toward doing so—in order to maintain credibility.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE MEDIA¹⁵

Aside from credibility, effective human rights advocacy often requires visibility and a positive public image. Most rights

groups which operate openly wish to expand their base of support in the community(ies) they are serving, as well as with policy-makers, opinion-shapers and funders. They do so by periodically publicizing their purpose, activities and/or findings. This may be done in a variety of ways including leafleting, putting up posters and speaking at public meetings; conducting targeted meetings with key individuals who influence public opinion; and seeking radio, television or newspaper coverage.

Some groups recruit members with a national profile—singers, actors and other well-known personalities—who already command the attention of the press and public. The involvement of popularly known and admired personalities can not only enhance an organization's visibility, but it can also help attract local funds and discourage attacks from governments leery of the mass mobilization of which such personalities may be capable. Though it is unlikely that national celebrities will become active in the day-to-day activities of a human rights organization, many are willing to serve on an honorary board or committee, making public appearances and statements on behalf of the group when called upon.

Making an organization's purpose explicit and well-known to the public can also serve an important preventive function. Several human rights groups reported crises that occurred when those affiliated with their organizations took positions or actions at variance with their organizational mandates and objectives. For example, following the demise of communist rule in one Eastern European country, a newly-formed and semi-autonomous branch of a major human rights organization suddenly began championing one national ethnic group at the expense of the others, alleging without foundation that those it condemned were in league with remnants of the former dictatorial regime. Such incidents can cause a significant setback for organizational credibility. Aggressively publicizing a group's mandate early on and immediately making a public statement disassociating a group from the renegade actions of a minority of its members can lessen the damage done by such an incident.

Developing a Public Relations Plan

In order to determine how to make a case to the public, organizations must first determine the objectives of their public relations activities. The following list compiled by SHATIL (with a few modifications) suggests the main categories of objectives:

1. Organizational visibility: To make the existence, purposes and programs of the organization known to various communities;
2. Public education: To inform the public and policy-makers about specific issues, problems, abuses, etc.;
3. Public image: To change public attitudes about a particular problem or target group, such as to eliminate negative stereotypes about a particular ethnic group;
4. Credibility: To make specific individuals in the group known as accurate, knowledgeable spokespersons on a particular

15. The Fund for Peace was unable to collect much data on how human rights groups publicize their efforts. We nonetheless thought that this was an important aspect of human rights institution-building, so we decided to offer the wisdom of two organizations with extensive experience in training local groups in this area. The information in this chapter, therefore, is drawn largely from two sources: "Press and Publicity" produced by the British Section of Amnesty International; and materials prepared by SHATIL, the Technical Assistance Project of the New Israel Fund in Jerusalem Israel. The SHATIL materials were written by Emily Gantz McKay, now president of MOSAICA, the Center for Non-Profit Development and Pluralism, in Washington, D.C.

issue or on behalf of the people the organization represents;

5. Pressure to change: To get specific improvements accomplished through decisions by policy-makers or funders.

According to SHATIL, most advocacy groups identify three or four "pressure to change" objectives to work toward over a several year period. In order to achieve such objectives, however, it is usually necessary to address the related "visibility," "credibility," "image" and "educational" objectives as well.

Developing an Effective Message

Once an organization's public relations objectives have been determined, it can turn to developing the message or messages it wants to convey to the public. Most groups report that simplicity and clarity are of the utmost importance. Messages should be free of jargon and should be carefully crafted to avoid words or phrases that are ambiguous or offensive to the community for whom the message is intended. The media is more likely to be interested in what an organization has to say if it does not have to work hard to understand the group's message. SHATIL offers the following list of helpful hints in developing a message that will appeal to the variety of media outlets:

1. Know the message you want to get across. Be ready with a very precise, pithy message which is as simple as possible;
2. Be sure to personalize and give examples which explain complicated issues to help people understand and empathize with your position. (A brief, human interest story is often the best way to illustrate a problem after you have stated it);
3. Be sure to back up your statements with appropriate documentation. Have statistics or other supporting information ready which will convince readers or listeners that what you say is true; be very sure that your statistics are accurate; and be sure to state them so that their meaning is clear to people who are not experts. Remember that the most effective statistics come from the government (if the government is considered credible), university researchers, or other high-credibility sources, or from original research that your organization has carried out. Too many statistics, however, tend to overwhelm and confuse people, so choose your best material;
4. Present your information calmly and accurately so that people will listen to what you have to say. As previously mentioned, your language—whether written or spoken—is important. Avoid name-calling and unnecessary descriptive adjectives which can distract the reader or listener from the facts, instead of the having the intended effect of reinforcing his or her outrage (see Chapter 9: Credibility);
5. Practice prior to a press interview. A mock interview can be very helpful, especially where you expect the interviewer to be somewhat hostile;

6. Try to interest the press in doing a feature story about your organization. A feature story is one of the most useful mechanisms for raising your visibility and credibility in the community and can even help foster a national profile. Be well prepared with history and background information about your organization, its programs, its accomplishments and its importance to the community you serve. Be able to suggest attractive subjects for pictures or videotaping.

Cultivating Media Contacts

Human rights groups need to educate themselves about the local media—newspapers, magazines, radio and television. Amnesty International urges its local chapters to consider the following questions with regard to the local media:

1. What issues do they cover?
2. Are there any journalists/reporters who seem sympathetic to human rights issues?
3. Is there a page on which citizen opinions on various issues are printed?
4. Do the papers use lots of photographs?

Amnesty advises its chapters to listen to the local radio; note the names of program reporters who seem sympathetic to human rights; and determine any preferences for straight news versus "feature" stories and opinion pieces. A list with the names, titles, addresses and phones/faxes of potentially sympathetic media contacts should then be compiled.

It is not always easy to get the press interested in human rights work, particularly if human rights is regarded as a sensitive subject and the press is partially or wholly government-controlled. Nonetheless, the chances of receiving press coverage are greatly enhanced when there has been personal contact between the group and the particular journalist or reporter targeted. Most groups which have been successful in obtaining media coverage have begun their efforts to cultivate media contacts prior to seeking coverage for a specific issue or event. If members of the board or others sympathetic to a group's cause have any press contacts, it is a good idea to have them set up a meeting with the group's spokesperson and make the initial introductions. Groups with no experience in dealing with the media and no one to arrange initial contacts often send a cover letter requesting a meeting with a short press release describing the nature, objectives and activities of their group to those journalists and reporters they have identified. Once an initial contact is made, many groups recommend sustaining the relationship with periodic updates on the group's activities, preferably in person.

Groups should not be discouraged, however, if potential press contacts do not respond initially to their overtures. This is common, and cultivating a relationship with the media takes time. If no response is forthcoming, groups should follow up with a phone call requesting a meeting to discuss the group's purpose and activities. If targeted media personnel continue to resist a group's efforts to make contact, groups should not give

up. Continuing to inform such potential contacts through periodic press releases and/or activity updates in writing can produce results over time. The receipt of a number of communications about an organization's work can often have a psychological impact, producing the impression that the group is well-established and becoming a force to be reckoned with even if a potential media contact has never had direct dealings with the group. Sometimes, a press contact will develop a certain confidence in a group simply because s/he has heard of it and has the sense that it is active.

It is also a good idea to designate a spokesperson for the organization (or several on different specific issues) with whom the press can consistently deal. This will help cement the relationship between the group and the press, and will minimize the confusion and/or inconsistent statements that can arise from having more than one group representative speak on the same issues. If a journalist contacts a member of the group other than the spokesperson seeking information or comment, the call should be referred, as a matter of policy, to the spokesperson. Based on its experience with multiple non-profit organizations, SHATIL further recommends that a staff person be given the responsibility of establishing and maintaining the organization's "media archive," consisting of the group's media list, copies of correspondence with various members of the press, press clippings which mention the group, and copies of all the organization's press releases.

Tips for Conducting Press Interviews

SHATIL offers some further hints with regard to specific media outlets:

1. Broadcast media interviews: radio and television:
 - a) Keep your responses brief. Respond to questions in one or two sentences where ever possible. State your answers as simply as you can, and use words which will be understood by the general population;
 - b) Be sure to get your message across, regardless of the question you are asked. You don't always have to respond fully to a question and you can use a question as an opening to convey the points you most want to make. For example, you might say, "That's an interesting question, but it is not the most important one. The real issue is...."
 - c) Don't let a hostile interviewer "get to you". If you lose your temper with such an interviewer, it makes you look petty. It is fine to indicate that you consider the question unfair or a statement inaccurate, but show that you know how to restrain yourself. For example, you might say, "that is really an unfair question, but let me answer it anyway...";
 - d) Use stories and humor to win over your audience. While you don't want to trivialize your work, you do want to project an image of a decent, rational person that the listener/viewer would personally like. Humor can also be very effective in dealing with a hostile interviewer;
 - e) Remember, unless the interview is live, it will probably be extensively edited. It is critical, therefore, that you avoid statements which could be dangerous out of context—a reporter may edit out your follow-up explanation. Do not say anything that could embarrass you or your organization;
 - f) In the case of radio, your voice is very important. A pleasant voice—confident but not too loud, easy to understand, speaking neither too fast or too slow—will help win over the audience;
 - g) Also in the case of radio, words which "paint a picture" are especially helpful. [If you are highlighting the poor condition of the nation's prisons, for example, you might set the scene for the listeners:
As I address you, Jose Morales crouches in his 3 X 2 X 2 meter cell unable to stand because the cell is so small; unable to see because there is no window or light; barely able to breathe...]
 - h) In the case of television, your dress is important. You don't want to alienate people by the way you look. Rather, you want to project the image of a solid, respectable person so that the public will listen seriously to what you have to say. Look well-kempt, and remember that plain, dark colors look better than prints on television;
 - i) Also in the case of television, body language is important. If you are sitting in a chair, lean forward and face the interviewer directly. This will help foster the impression that you are honest—not afraid to look the interviewer in the eye. You should look alert, yet relaxed. Avoid folding your arms or doing anything else that might make you look like you feel threatened by the questions being asked;
 - j) Finally with regard to television, make the organization's name as visible as possible. If you are being interviewed on the premises of your organization, or at an event organized by your group, make sure a banner or some other sign with your organization's name is in plain view of the camera.
2. Print media interviews:
 - a) Remember that even if you are not being taped, everything you say is "on record" unless you place prior limits on the reporter. Your most provocative or controversial statements are likely to be quoted, perhaps out of context. If you do not want to be quoted on certain issues, you should either make the whole interview "off the record" or decide instead to say nothing that cannot be quoted. Although some reporters are totally reliable about quotes which are "not for attribution," many are not;
 - b) Written materials can be very helpful to newspaper or magazine reporters, who may read them after the interview when writing their story. Coming to each interview with a written statement by your organization about the issue at hand, a copy of any reports

with appropriate statistics or background information, and a press release will increase the chances of getting quoted and being quoted accurately;

- c) Be prepared for telephone interviews. Some journalists will prefer to do an interview by phone rather than in person. Be sure that a phone interview is also handled by the designated spokesperson, and that that person is just as prepared and on-guard about quotes as s/he would be in a face to face encounter.

Preparing Press Releases and Other Media Materials

Press releases can serve a variety of functions including:

1. To announce a newsworthy event such as a demonstration, awards ceremony, groundbreaking or press conference to which the press is invited;
2. To provide a report of a meeting;
3. To announce new campaigns or provide progress reports;
4. To provide information about something which has already happened which is newsworthy, such as the arrest of human rights activists or a government change of policy which bodes badly or well for the country's human rights record;
5. To provide general background information on your organization or on a topical issue.

The ideal press release is less than two pages, and succinctly describes the upcoming event, report, or incident which has occurred. The press release should include information on where, when, how and why the event is taking place or the incident occurred, as well as why the subject of the press release should be of interest to the constituency targeted by the particular media outlet in question. A press release written in a format resembling a news story will be more readily accessible to a reporter or journalist, and will increase the chances of a story being run. Where relevant, a press release might also include statistical or background information, in addition to the basic facts, and a comment or quote from your organization's spokesperson on the subject. All press releases should be written on your organization's stationery, and include the name and phone number of the contact person who can provide additional information, as well as the date that the press release was written. If the information contained in the press release can be used by the media immediately, it is a good idea to put the words "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" at the top of the page. If you want the media to wait to run the story until a specific time, you should indicate "FOR RELEASE ON [DATE] AFTER [TIME]". A sample press release is provided in Appendix E.

The timing of a press release and characterization of the issue or event is also important. Human rights groups are most successful in obtaining press coverage when they are able to find a "news hook" for their story which strikes reporters and journalists as relevant and timely. Groups must identify the optimal times when the media will be interested in their cause, event or specific issue. A story about a particular human rights

abuse, for example, is less likely to be run if it appears "out of the blue" than if it seems to relate to another issue that has recently received attention in the media. If the local press has recently run several stories about corruption in the police force or a government crackdown on political activists, a human rights group's press release on police brutality or torture in the nation's detention centers will seem like logical follow-up to issues about which the media is already committed to writing. It is the responsibility of the author of the press release, however, to shape this mental association for the journalist or reporter. With regard to timing, it is also important for groups to find out when each media outlet's deadlines are and deliver the press release in advance of them.

Finally, following up with the journalist or reporter after sending a press release is critical. If it is possible to reach the person to whom the release has been sent by phone, it is usually wise to call to make sure s/he received your communication. A follow-up phone call may give you the opportunity to make the case for your story more persuasively and offer additional information.

Organizing Press Events

In most cases, a press release announcing a conference or activity which you want the media to attend should be sent out a week to ten days prior to the event. A follow-up phone call the day before the event will ensure that targeted press persons remember your event, and will give you a better sense of who is coming. The ideal sites for the event will vary according to the group and subject matter, but it is usually best to try to hold the event in the community which your group is serving or at your office. It is a good idea to have on hand extra copies of the press release and any additional background information sent to press invitees, since they may have lost the materials or failed to bring them to the event.

Most press events include several speakers. Usually, these are the organization's spokesperson and/or executive director if these are different, sometimes a member of the community being served (or a victim who has been assisted), and/or a celebrity or figure with a high profile who has endorsed the group's cause. It is important that speeches be brief and compelling. Time at the end of the program should be allowed for the press to ask questions or conduct private interviews with group members, clients, victims, etc. Most press persons will not stay more than an hour, so it is important to keep to a tight schedule.

During the question and answer session of any event including the press, groups should be aware that journalists and reporters rarely feel constrained by the subject matter of the event itself. Thus, in addition to answering questions on the topic at hand, you should also be prepared to answer questions on other related subjects, including your group's credibility. Some typical questions that human rights groups are asked include the following:

1. Where does your funding come from? Do you accept money from governments or opposition forces?

2. Where does your information come from and how do you ensure its accuracy?
3. How can you claim to be a "neutral" organization when your positions on issues are clearly in line with the opposition?
4. Aren't you controlled by foreign interests?
5. Why are you defending the interests of criminals or societal outcasts who have chosen their sorry lot?
6. Aren't human rights a luxury which cannot be addressed until the country has reached a certain level of economic development?
7. What are you able to accomplish? Isn't your mandate unrealistic?
8. What is your position on... [a topic or policy unrelated to the purpose of the press event or even your organizational mandate itself]?

Your group should also consider making the event as photogenic as possible. Some human rights groups have been very successful in getting media coverage in part because of their imaginative and compelling visual displays. An Iranian human rights group based in exile, for example, is known by its trademark display of a live person blindfolded and shackled to a chair, surrounded by huge color photographs of the scarred backs and feet of Iranian torture victims, illustrating the treatment suspected political opponents receive in prison. A Sudanese group (also operating in exile) hung sheets of continuous-feed computer paper from ceiling to floor on which the names of political prisoners were printed to dramatically illustrate the enormous number of detainees held by the Sudanese government. Colorful and easy-to-read graphs and charts; miniature reproductions of the squalid conditions in which a particular class of people live; visual representations of disparities between gender, class or ethnic groups; and dramatic re-enactments are among the visual techniques used by groups to capture the attention of the press.

GENERATING RESOURCES

Where can a New Organization Turn for Funds?

Many NGOs experience serious difficulties in raising sufficient funds to support their work. Financial uncertainty threatens the continuity of human rights projects, and even the ability of human rights groups to function at all. Organizations which are able to obtain the funds they need usually have developed a record of effort and achievement over time that has enabled them to build a firm base of support.

Many groups reported that the initial phase of their operation—usually the first six months to two years—was the most difficult financially. Without a track record for effectiveness and credibility, they were unable to secure outside funding and relied almost exclusively on the personal resources of a few dedicated founders. Many activists wishing to initiate human rights groups, however, do not have personal resources at their disposal. And while modest personal funding may seem un-

avoidable at the outset, it can inhibit professionalism and accountability. When an organization's activists are also its funders, the potential for arbitrary decision-making and conflicts of institutional and personal interests is increased. Although we appreciate the special difficulty of raising funds from external sources during the earliest phase of a group's life, we have observed that efforts to secure outside funds are also hampered by a lack of knowledge about how to approach funders and where to find them. The purpose of this chapter is to help strengthen those efforts so that groups can operate on the most professional basis at the earliest possible stage of their development.

Recognizing the difficulty in attracting foundation support before an organization has established its credibility, many groups have started modestly and focused on developing local sources to cover their initial costs. Some groups have recruited wealthy individuals to provide necessary seed-money. Others have successfully approached local businesses and religious institutions to provide start-up funds. These groups have often started by seeking funds for a pilot project, rather than a full-fledged institution, to help them establish the track record necessary to attract larger grants for institution-building later on. Other groups focus on developing a broad membership base to generate dues to support their early work.

Once an NGO has established its credibility, it may begin to rely on a larger variety of sources for funding. These potentially include monies from private individual and corporate donations; membership fees; fees charged for training, materials, services, cultural events; international sources; government subsidies; etc. Depending on local conditions, however, some of these funding sources may be unavailable or inappropriate. For example, a human rights group may choose to safeguard its independence by refusing to accept government funds. Or it may find that it is unable to generate adequate resources by relying strictly on membership fees. Or it may be unable to sponsor public fundraising events without incurring the wrath of local authorities.

Developing Local Sources of Funding

Many human rights organizations focus their attention on seeking funds from international agencies and foundations, overlooking the possibilities for obtaining organizational support by generating human, material, and financial resources locally. Securing resources locally can serve to deepen the commitment of those who donate them, as well as that of international funders who sometimes insist that an organization demonstrate its local support before they will consider a grant proposal. In addition, tapping into a diversity of funding sources helps groups maintain independence in agenda-setting and decision-making, at risk when suspension of assistance from a group's sole source of support would immediately end its activities. The utilization of local resources helps to avoid dependency on foreign funders, and since money raised from international donors is frequently ear-marked for specific projects and cannot be used for core or institutional support,

locally generated resources can help pay for things such as rent, office equipment, staff salaries, and transportation costs.

Most groups which successfully utilize local resources recruit volunteer personnel and services. Volunteers can be used to relieve the administrative burden, or to provide sporadic professional services such as medical, legal or accounting assistance. Some organizations have been able to secure services at a reduced fee from local businesses or other entities who believe in their cause. Others make use of "affiliates" or people who are willing to donate their expertise to organizations' public programs (for example, a prominent person or academic willing to be a guest speaker for an organizational event). One organization reported exchanging the use of its facility and equipment for volunteer time. Sometimes, the staff itself operates on a volunteer basis.

We found that human rights groups also saved a lot of money by securing free material resources. Churches, businesses or other sympathetic institutions were asked to offer use of their facilities, equipment, supplies and/or furniture free of charge. Where the political environment makes open demonstrations of support inadvisable, prospective patrons were approached privately and told that their anonymous contributions were also welcome. One organization asked each member of their group to contribute one item necessary to the functioning of the office, so members themselves donated a table, chairs and some vital supplies. Another organization decided to reduce its need for material resources altogether and opted not to have an office; the group held their meetings under a tree or in people's homes. More unconventional approaches included "liberating" an unused government office, and converting old buses, planes and trains to offices and classrooms.

A number of human rights organizations also have developed ways to raise local cash. The range of local fundraising options available to groups, however, will depend on the legal, tax, institutional and other limitations prevailing in the country in question. Some groups have become membership organizations, generating support from members in the form of dues. If a large enough group of members make a personal commitment to pay regular dues, the organization develops a fundamental stability upon which it can build with other sources of support. The membership also feels empowered when it sees that it is sustaining the organization through its own donations. Other approaches included renting out half the available space of a donated office, and providing professional services for a fee to those able to pay, using the money raised to subsidize those who are not. One African group generated funds by providing legal services for a fee to other NGOs, as well as to small businesses and private organizations, utilizing the full-time efforts of two lawyers from its membership.

Other local fundraising strategies included:

1. Subscriptions and the sale of organizational reports, newsletters and other publications;
2. Charging a fee for training sessions;
3. Holding street fairs, bazaars and auctions where donated or

member-made local handicrafts, national clothes, books, food, etc. are sold;

4. Organizing a raffle or lottery for a donated prize;
5. Sponsoring exhibitions, concerts, plays and cultural and sporting events and charging an entrance fee;
6. Renting a facility to hold seminars and speaker programs and charging admission;
7. Providing a recycling service for a fee;
8. Organizing a 24-hour fast to call attention to a particular human rights issue and asking people to donate what they would have spent on food for the day;
9. Organizing a walkathon or danceathon where individuals recruit multiple sponsors who pledge a certain amount of money for each mile walked or hour danced;
10. Pot-luck dinners, lunches, barbecues, etc. where an entrance fee is charged;
11. Street and door-to-door solicitations of funds;
12. Income generation projects (renting out equipment; buying livestock and selling its bi-products such as milk, skin, etc.);
13. Purchasing and establishing a guest house and asking people to support the organization by staying there;
14. Asking organizational members to allocate to the organization a small percentage of the profit they make privately;
15. Investing revenues into a trust fund.

The Pros and Cons of Foreign Funding

Many human rights groups sustain their organizations with funding from foreign foundations and governments and, to a lesser extent, religious institutions. The obvious advantage to obtaining funding from these quarters is that it represents a large pool of money. In countries severely politically polarized, it may also be advantageous to seek money from international donors to avoid the appearance or reality of local political actors or special interest groups or communities exerting undue influence on an organization's activities. In exploring foreign sources of support, however, it is important to know the characteristics of the funders you wish to approach. Where do they get their money? Do they have particular approaches to human rights? Will their reputation have an impact on your NGO?

Many NGOs which have pursued foreign funds report frustration with the donor/grantee relationship, as well as with the "unreasonable restrictions and requirements" of donor agencies. Typical complaints included the following:

1. Institutional vs. project support:

Some international donors want to fund specific projects, but are unwilling to provide the general support crucial to building the infrastructure an organization needs to carry out such projects successfully. Some of these funders will not provide money for "overhead" expenses such as salaries, office space, or equipment. And even in instances where funders are willing to provide such institutional support, some insist on conditions that are unreasonable under local circumstances, such as re-

quiring a group to rent rather than buy equipment even when purchasing it would be cheaper;

2. Sustainability:

As with any organization, the objectives and priorities of funders may shift over time, making long-term financial commitments to NGOs unlikely. Although some funders will make two or three-year commitments, many will guarantee funding only for a year or for the duration of a specific project. (This is particularly true of funding agencies based in the United States.) It is not unusual for these funders to suddenly decide to shift their financial assistance to other issues or areas of the world. When this happens, NGOs which had been receiving their support must scramble to find an alternative source of funding in order to maintain their on-going activities. As one respondent put it:

It is sometimes difficult to depend on the regularity of funding from international donors; not only do their priorities sometimes differ from ours, but their priorities seem to change from year to year. In order to write a successful proposal for a given year, you almost have to anticipate what will appeal to them in that year.

Unstable funding puts pressure on many NGOs to re-structure themselves, which is a major drain on their resources and morale. Many human rights groups also report feeling abandoned by the international donor community in the post Cold War era. Much of the money once ear-marked for Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America, they feel, has been diverted to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics. An extended period of international financial instability has also led to a decrease in support on the part of donor countries for overall foreign aid in favor of domestic spending;

3. Failure to support income generation:

Donors often urge human rights groups to become more self-supporting. Unfortunately, few are willing to commit the long-term support needed to enable groups to develop such capacity. Many of these funders also are restricted in their ability to fund activities that may become income-generating. Often this is because the national laws under which they operate prohibit them from granting money for such purposes. Typically, for example, funders are prohibited by law from funding any profit-making activities;

4. Reporting requirements:

Most foundations and government agencies require detailed financial and narrative record-keeping and reporting. They do so to ensure accountability and the effective use of their funds. Some NGOs complain, however, about grants that are made in three or six month installments, with each new installment dependent on the submission of a financial and narrative report on the last. Many NGOs are also frustrated by

the typical requirement that they document the expenditure of funds with receipts which are frequently difficult or impossible to obtain. It is often not feasible for small groups to hire full-time accountants, and in the absence of such assistance, these reporting requirements take a significant amount of time to fulfill, burdening groups which are already understaffed and underfunded;

5. Donor influence on organizational agendas:

A number of NGOs also express concern that some international donors attempt to influence their agendas. Although constructive suggestions may indeed strengthen NGO efforts, and should be welcomed, some local human rights groups are troubled when funders seek to change their mandates or otherwise alter the fundamental scope of their work. Some funding agencies in effect create new priorities by offering funds for activities not originally identified by human rights groups themselves. While some more established human rights groups are capable of avoiding donor-directed programs by refusing funding with "strings attached," newer and chronically under-funded groups often feel that they have no choice but to accept donor terms;

6. Distortion of the human rights community:

Receiving funds from abroad can distort the whole local human rights community because some organizations are more adept at fundraising than others. The groups which are doing the most visible work and are the most capable of packaging it for a foreign audience are not always the ones doing the best work. Some rights organizations have complained about the "king-making" role that foreign funders can play when they increase the status and operational capacity of some groups over others, inadvertently marginalizing less visible groups which are nonetheless doing equally or even more important work.

7. The "apolitical" requirement:

Finally, some human rights groups complain that they are forced to portray themselves as apolitical to potential donors despite the fact that their activities—for example advocacy on behalf of marginalized groups such as agricultural laborers, ethnic minorities or women—inevitably involve them in politically sensitive debates. In such situations, their advocacy may require them to organize demonstrations or publicly condemn government actions. Some funders, however, are afraid to risk being attacked as having aided and abetted "opposition forces".

In response to the difficulties enumerated above, NGOs which want to pursue foreign funding may want to consider the following general principles:

1. Recognize that many international donors are more likely to fund specific projects than to provide institutional support. There are several ways to deal with this problem:

- a) make a strong case, preferably in person, for core support;
 - b) build institutional support into each project budget. Project budgets can legitimately include the percentage of the salaries, overhead, equipment and communications costs that will be devoted to the project. Thus, if the project represents one third of the organization's overall activities in a given year, then one third of the costs of running the organization could be incorporated into the project budget;
 - c) find other means of supporting your organization's institutional requirements, particularly if they generate a source of income (see the section above devoted to generating local resources);
2. Expect donors to require conditions of accountability in return for assistance:
 - a) before accepting a grant, explain to funders any anticipated difficulties in documenting expenditures and come to an agreement on how to demonstrate those expenses for which it is impossible to obtain receipts;
 - b) develop accounting procedures that will support this agreement;
 - c) insist on non-interference by donors in program formulation and decision-making;
 - d) do not accept aid unless you are capable of and ready to meet the conditions to which your organization and the donor have agreed;
 3. Despite the apparent reliability of future funding, seek to diversify your funding sources so that you are not dependent on a single donor;
 4. Ask for an evaluation of any potential donor by other NGOs and by other funders. Investigate the potential donor thoroughly to determine if its objectives and vision parallel those of your organization. Find out if possible about other organizations which have successfully applied for funding from the donor, and use the information to determine the potential for a successful application by your organization;
 5. If your organization is considered controversial, be particularly careful about the reputations of the funders you approach; your detractors may try to discredit you by accusing you of taking money from improper sources;
 6. Anticipate and directly address funders' potential concerns about the political nature of your work by emphasizing that though your work may have a political impact, your group is non-partisan and impartial.

Identifying External Sources of Funding

Experienced human rights groups and funders recommend that organizations seeking funding develop a knowledge about the sources of available funding worldwide. Consulting written sources of information (see Appendix F) and soliciting the recommendation of other NGOs about possible sources of funding are good first steps. Donors who have already provided

your organization with funding can also be a valuable source of information on other like-minded funders and may be willing to provide an introduction to them.

Before submitting a grant proposal or meeting with a prospective funder, you should request a copy of the prospective donor's annual report and any other publication that describes its mission and activities. A human rights group makes itself more attractive to a donor if it shows that it is knowledgeable about the funder and that both have parallel objectives. You should also request information about specific application procedures for submitting proposals.

What International Funders Look for in a Proposal

There is no magic formula as to how to prepare a funding proposal, but there are some basic rules of thumb. First, potential funders look at the nature of an organization. Is it impartial, non-partisan and independent (this does not mean that you have to be antagonistic to the government or other relevant actors; only that they do not dictate your policies or activities)? Does its staff, membership, etc. represent the diversity (ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.) of the constituency it is serving? Does the organization have an activist orientation? Is the organization truly committed to its stated mandate? Has it established credibility in the communities it is serving?

Second, funders will assess a group's potential for effectiveness as a whole, based on its composition, characterization of mandate, and internal structure. They will question whether the organization's mandate is manageable. If the group's mandate is too broad, funders may conclude that the group is being unrealistic and will not be effective in its undertakings. Funders will also assess whether the group has a reasonable chance of accomplishing its objectives given the financial support available, the reaction by the public to the group's work, the prevailing social and political environment, and the organization's leadership and staff. Does the organization's staff possess the necessary skills to implement the mandate? Do those associated with the organization have histories free of human rights abuse? Some funders may also examine the internal workings of an organization. Is a democratic decision-making structure in place? Are operations run smoothly or do they get bogged down in bureaucracy?

Finally, funders will want to assess an organization's track record. It is extremely important to enumerate practical accomplishments and provide statistics and evidence where possible. This may be done by submitting letters of commendation; thanks from clients served; proof of case victories or policy reforms achieved; articles written about your work; materials produced by your organization; international action inspired; etc. as appendices to your proposal. It is a good idea to request that those who appreciate your work say so in writing to help you demonstrate your effectiveness. It can also be helpful to include recommendations from other organizations, prominent personalities, etc., or list such entities as references, including their names, addresses, phone numbers, etc. Even if funders

do not review these materials closely, their inclusion will help demonstrate your effectiveness. In the case of a new group which has not yet had an opportunity to establish a track record, the backgrounds and reputations of the individuals involved will be important to the funder's assessment. In such cases, it can also be helpful to attach the resumes or biographies of principal staff and board members, as well as any personal references that might be relevant.

Once a funder is satisfied that your organization as a whole is worthy of support, s/he will turn to the subject of the proposal at hand. The most successful proposals demonstrate that the organization seeking support is assessing its own situation and needs at regular intervals. The proposal should demonstrate that the project for which you seek funding has been derived from a rational planning process, and that such planning is based on a continuous process of self-evaluation by your organization. Whether your proposal is for general support or specific project support, the following elements will be important to include:

1. A description of who you are, the problem you established your organization to solve; and what you have been able to accomplish to date;
2. A description of clearly-defined organizational and/or project objectives which enumerate specific expected outcomes;
3. A description of your methods for achieving the stated objectives. This section is central to your proposal and should include a step by step description with as much detail as possible. It also should include an explanation of why the methods enumerated have been chosen and why you think they will work;
4. Anticipated follow-up activities if the proposal is project specific;
5. A description of how you will evaluate the effectiveness of your overall work (in the case of a general proposal) or the project (in the case of a project proposal). The evaluation section should list specific measuring sticks (see Chapter 12: Evaluation) which speak both to process—to what extent was the program conducted in a manner consistent with the original plan?—and to impact—to what extent were the stated objects achieved?
6. A request for a specific amount of money for a designated time period;
7. A funding strategy. A list of present and other potential sources of funding for the organization or project, as well as a plan for securing funding for future phases beyond the grant period should be included. Organizations must demonstrate that they are aggressively seeking various sources of funding, as international donors sometimes decline to fund a project or group when they are afraid of becoming its sole means of support;
8. A budget. Typical budget items include: salaries; rent; office furniture and equipment; supplies; communications; local transport; travel; translation; printing; resource materials; and accounting expenses. Consider including an item for a financial audit. If you undertake an independent audit, you will impress funders with your intention to be transparent and accountable. If your organization is contributing resources not enumerated in the budget, or you have been able to secure donations of labor, professional services, facilities, second-hand equipment, and so on, their monetary value should be estimated and included in the budget as "in-kind contributions". This shows the funder that you are resourceful, and are not depending on them exclusively for support. Some other things to keep in mind: a) it is usually inadvisable for a young organization to start out with too large a budget—funders may develop concerns about unrealistic expectations or fear that you are expanding more rapidly than your experience can support; b) funders will be on the look-out for budget items, especially salaries, that look inflated or based on Northern rather than local costs; c) it is wise to avoid asking for expensive equipment without a good justification for why it is needed, particularly before the basics are in place; d) it can often be beneficial to include a budget narrative along with the actual list of budget items, explaining what each item is and why it is necessary; e) if you are requesting project support, most funders will want to see both a project budget and an overall organizational budget which includes the cost of the project; and f) although budgets are estimates and not actual costs, it is still advisable to do enough research to fairly accurately predict each item;
9. A summary. Many funders like to have a one-page summary which they can detach from a longer proposal and circulate to their board. The summary should include one or two sentences on who you are and the problem you are addressing. A paragraph or two should be devoted to the specific nature of the project being proposed and how it will be carried out. Several concluding sentences should cover how much is being requested and for what time period; what the overall project and organizational budget is; and who else is already funding it.

Several general observations about the submission of grant proposals to foreign funders are worth noting. The first is that many donors have funding cycles and only consider proposals on a quarterly, six month or even yearly basis. It is important to find out whether the funding agency you are approaching has deadlines, and if so, to respect them. Second, funding proposals should be accompanied by a one-page cover letter which briefly introduces your organization and project, highlights the parallels between your and the potential funders' objectives, and requests a specific amount of money. When considering enclosures, you should try to strike a balance between showing off your best materials, references, etc. on the one hand, without overwhelming the proposal reviewers on the other. Pick your best products and indicate that it is merely representative of your work. If your organization has undergone a financial audit, it is helpful to include it with the proposal.

The presentation of your proposal is also important. Your proposal is an indication of your professionalism, and many funders will not take the time to read it several times or consult

with you if they don't understand it. If you are concerned about the clarity and overall impression your proposal is likely to make because you are doing it in a second language, or simply because you are new to the fundraising field, you should consult with others who have had more experience. Further, we would advise that the proposal should be neat but should not have expensive looking binders, covers or tabs. This can be counterproductive if a funder concludes from the proposal presentation that the organization is wasting its resources.

Is it Advisable to Accept Government Funding?

Much controversy surrounds the question of whether it is advisable to accept funds either from home or foreign governments. Many human rights organizations refuse government funding on principle because they believe that the independence and credibility of those groups which accept such funding is compromised. Other organizations accept money from certain foreign governments, particularly in Europe and the United States, but not from their own. Still others determine whether to take money from governments—home or foreign—on a case by case basis. Most of the groups which do accept government funding argue that their government sponsors have respectable human rights records and do not interfere with organizational policies or decision making. They also point out that they could not survive without these funds.

Before accepting funds from governments or government funded agencies, organizations should consider the risks involved. Governments have their own agendas, and though many now proclaim a commitment to human rights principles, such principles are rarely, if ever, their priority, and may be selectively applied. Organizations which accept money from governments which either have poor human rights records themselves or support other governments with such records risk damaging their credibility. This is particularly true in the case of monitoring organizations which receive funds from their own governments. Such organizations are unlikely to be seen as independent and impartial. Although some governments may not *in fact* intrude upon or in any way try to affect the activities of an organization, credibility can be compromised even by the *perception* of government influence. Some human rights NGOs avoid associating or working with colleagues receiving government money altogether. There are also foundations which refuse to fund organizations which obtain state support.

Accepting government funds may not be as great a concern for groups engaged in technical assistance, human rights education or the provision of social services. Although some activists feel that the reputations of even those organizations engaged in non-monitoring activities could be affected by their association with governments, groups must weigh this possibility against the funding realities they face. In assessing the costs and benefits of accepting government funds, groups should consider their mandates, the local environments in which they operate, the reputations of the government funders in question, the likely reaction to government funding by important constituencies including other NGOs and private funders, and their ability to raise sufficient funds from other sources.

A Final Note of Caution

In utilizing one or several of the resource generation strategies outlined in this chapter, it is important to bear in mind that more money is not always better. We have heard numerous accounts of groups which were destroyed or nearly so by infusions of too much money too early, before they had developed the capacity to absorb the funds or undertake the expansion required by them. Money troubles also may be a function of other problems within an organization such as bad management, unwise allocation of resources, etc. Because money for human rights work is almost always scarce, organizations often have a tendency to blame their problems on insufficient funds. To build strong human rights organizations with the ability to endure over time, however, it is important to distinguish between those difficulties that arise purely from funding shortages and those that may have more structural roots.

EVALUATION

What is an Evaluation?

An evaluation is a rigorous examination designed to assess the effectiveness of an individual, project or organization. Evaluations may be ongoing or summary, and can take many forms from staff meetings and progress reports to cumulative data analysis and third-party reviews. Most often, ongoing evaluations are carried out by an organization's staff, whereas cumulative reviews may involve the board of directors, staff, a consultant who works outside the organization, or some combination of the above. Evaluations usually examine both the impact of the organization's work on the outside world and the organization's internal functioning.

What is the Purpose of an Evaluation?

Evaluations force you to think critically about the work you are doing and the approach you take to it. They provide an opportunity to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses, achievements and problem areas so that groups can determine what reprogramming and other changes may be necessary. Without such an evaluation, it is hard to identify problems and prioritize and shape necessary changes. Evaluations can also be motivational. Ideally, an evaluation is a team effort in which an organization's members are providing feedback to each other. Often this process helps foster a sense of group cohesion and fortifies the commitment of those involved.

Funders also tend to have more confidence in organizations that regularly evaluate themselves and their work, and grants may be contingent on the establishment of an evaluative system. Some funders will make special funds available for an outside consultant to evaluate your organization. A number of organizations routinely include such external evaluations as an item in their general budget. Organizations often find it helpful to share copies of these evaluations with present and potential funders, both to demonstrate their commitment

to self-evaluation and to underscore the need for funders to address problems that consultants have identified.

Are Evaluations Important for Human Rights NGOs?

Evaluations are particularly important for human rights NGOs which must regularly demonstrate their effectiveness. This process also can be important for generating resources, attracting competent and committed members to the organization and maintaining the confidence of the community/ies that groups serve. Some human rights groups conduct evaluations virtually from the start of their active operations. However, for many groups it is difficult to create the time and necessary distance to do an honest evaluation. Many groups do such evaluations only when donors require it. As one respondent from Latin America said:

One of the reasons is lack of present technical ability on our part to facilitate such an evaluation. But it is also difficult to attain the financial means of either training ourselves to accomplish the objective of evaluation or to develop channels to those with expertise in organizational evaluation.

The evaluation process can be intimidating and time-consuming, and often is made more difficult by the fact that many forms of human rights work do not easily lend themselves to measurement. If you are engaged in human rights education or raising awareness about women's issues, for example, how do you assess the impact of your efforts? Many groups regard an evaluation of their internal functioning with equal apprehension. The perception of the executive director or board is that since everything seems to be running smoothly, why spend already limited time fixing something that is not broken? The experience of many groups, however, is that problems with the potential to paralyze organizational efforts are not always immediately visible.

How can you Prepare for an Evaluation?

Whether you are evaluating an annual plan or a specific project, you must determine at the outset how you will measure the success of your undertaking. Is your definition of success blurred? It is important to establish criteria for success and performance measurements. A vague standard of success like "furthering human rights" may be your long-term objective, but it cannot be a basis for measuring the accomplishment of your more immediate goals.

Preparation for an evaluation ideally starts at the beginning of an organization's life when mandate and implementation strategies are being determined. In order to measure your effectiveness, you must specify objectives, predict outcomes and set timetables which are measurable in months or years (see Chapter 2 on mandate and setting measurable objectives). For example, if your objective is to provide free legal assistance to displaced persons, and your predicted outcome is that

in one year's time you will have provided legal advice to 150 displaced persons, represented 75 in court, and fostered legal literacy in the community at large, then you have established a basis for evaluation. Did you provide legal advice to the numbers anticipated? If so, to what action did the advice lead? Were 75 displaced persons represented in court? If not, why not? Do the reasons reflect unanticipated obstacles? Was the problem unavoidable or does it reflect a weakness in planning? How many of the 75 cases were successful? Did winning cases for displaced persons improve their overall situation? And so on.

The educational objective—fostering legal literacy in the larger displaced community—is harder to quantify. Questions that might reveal the effectiveness of the literacy program would obviously depend on specific local circumstances, but might include: 1) are displaced persons more likely to characterize the problems that affect them in legal terms? 2) are displaced persons more likely to seek legal remedies and avail themselves of the newly established legal aid services?

Mechanisms for Evaluating NGOs

There are many ways to evaluate your work. You must decide which mechanisms will work best based on the nature of your work, organizational structure, membership, etc. We will mention a few of the most common evaluation mechanisms, but urge you to adapt rather than adopt these, and create new ones that are specifically suited to your particular circumstances.

Evaluation mechanisms basically fall into two categories: ongoing and summary. Ongoing mechanisms assess the organization's work and internal functioning on a regular basis *as the year proceeds*. Ongoing evaluative mechanisms would include regular staff meetings; periodic progress reports; case file development and review; staff appraisal and review; program activity observation; and interviews.

Regular staff meetings provide an opportunity to review program goals and outcomes, problems and corrective solutions. Staff meetings should have written agendas with time limits for each item so that these meetings remain focused. Members of the staff should be responsible for maintaining whatever data may be connected with their area of responsibility, and should be prepared to report on its implications when called upon at a staff meeting.

Periodic progress reports submitted by staff which have responsibility for programs or projects can also serve as early warning systems. Such reports would usually include a fiscal, as well as substantive, component. If an organization produces a quarterly newsletter, or has to provide periodic reports to funders, the progress reports can be easily converted into these documents and will not take much extra time to prepare.

Those organizations which do work involving cases, whether they focus on health, legal aid, or political prisoners, will need to collect, store and analyze data in an ongoing and systematic way (see Chapter 7: Establishing Methodical Procedures). Records of the nature and number of cases handled, the reactions of the clients and relevant authorities, services

and/or referrals provided, client contacts, witnesses, notes on conversations about the case, case outcomes and possible or required follow-up will be critical to the later evaluation.

Similarly, in instances where groups are lobbying for legislative reform, the evaluation process will be greatly assisted by the maintenance of extensive records on support mobilized for the reform, the names of legislators won over to the cause, etc. It may be possible, for example, to conclude at the later evaluation stage that although cases were not won, or reform was not accomplished, the organization's work was nonetheless effective in bringing about other benefits to the community it was established to serve. Such benefits are harder to identify without a good record-maintenance system.

Regularly observing how well a staff person is performing his/her role in the organization can also provide insight into how well the program for which s/he is responsible is going. Some NGOs do formal staff reviews where staff members are evaluated in writing according to pre-established criteria annually. Some do it twice a year or even quarterly. The final ongoing evaluation technique we came across was called "program activity observation" or "peer observation". Some NGOs involved in providing services to refugees have devised a system where each staff member observes the work of a colleague and provides feedback during case intake and counseling interviews. The disadvantage of this system is that co-workers are sometimes hesitant to critique each other, but organizations which have instituted this evaluative mechanism report that it is extremely useful. Finally, conducting interviews with board members, members of your organization's constituency and leaders in the community about their impressions of your work can provide valuable feedback.

Evaluations can also be in summary form. Summary evaluations usually take place annually or every two years, or at the end of a particular grant or contract period. Summary evaluation strategies include: cumulative data analysis (quantitative and qualitative data collected over time is compiled and analyzed to assess the performance of a particular project or program); follow-up study (follow-up interviews are conducted with former beneficiaries of the program to assess long term effectiveness); production of a final or year-end report enumerating the successes and failures of the program; and third party analysis (a consultant with expertise in evaluating your type of NGO is brought in from the outside to assess your effectiveness).

Most groups which evaluate themselves utilize some combination of the ongoing and summary mechanisms. Some groups reported developing a detailed work-plan at the beginning of each year to be reviewed at a staff/board retreat or conference at the end of the year. Several organizations with branch offices required each office to draw up a similar work plan for their localities. Some organizations utilized weekly and even daily staff meetings. Developing the right combination of evaluative strategies must take into account each organization's peculiar circumstances, keeping in mind the need to provide for effective assessments while at the same time avoiding the creation of a cumbersome bureaucracy.

Some human rights groups emphasized what evaluation is *not*. Though a formal reporting to the organization's membership, staff, and leadership is important, simply reporting to an annual meeting is not an effective evaluation technique, no matter what the nature of the feed-back from the organization's own associates may be.

Evaluating the Internal Functioning of an NGO

So far, we have spoken generally about evaluation techniques. We thought, however, that it might be helpful to include some of the questions that evaluators ask to assess organizational effectiveness. The following list of questions was compiled from our interviews, the written reports of human rights groups and several human rights workshops, and some of the written materials produced by expert evaluators. The list focuses on evaluating the *internal* functioning of an NGO, and is by no means exhaustive:

The Board of Directors:

1. Are board members active and committed?
2. Are there mechanisms in place for regularly educating the board about the work of the organization?
3. Are board members fulfilling the functions assigned to them?
4. Has a proper balance been struck between the roles of the board and the staff?
5. Is the diversity of the community(ies) being served represented on the board? (vis-a-vis gender, religion, ethnic diversity, etc.)

Mandate:

1. Is the purpose of your organization clearly defined? Is it realistic in scope, as well as substance? Is it realistic with regard to the prevailing political and social environment?
2. Have you identified short term, as well as long term objectives with time tables and predicted outcomes?
3. Do the members of your organization agree on the values, beliefs and underlying assumptions that guide the work of the organization?
4. Do all members have a clear understanding of what business you are in? (By "business," we mean primary program activity such as monitoring, legal aid, health education, etc.);

Planning and Goal Setting:

1. Are you using your organization's objectives as management tools to evaluate progress toward achievement of goals?
2. Do your program strategies include: the objectives to be achieved; the time period for achievement; and the resources required?
3. Have you developed a 3-5 year plan?
4. Do you have an annual planning process to set goals and budget?
5. Does your program planning process involve your "end user" (clients or representatives of the communities being

served) in determining how any given program will be delivered?

Organizational Structure:

1. Does your organizational structure ensure that work is delegated and accomplished in an efficient and effective way?
2. Are there clear lines of authority and responsibility, including who reports to whom?
3. What are the methods of communication and coordination among the different levels of staff?
4. Is there a decision-making structure in place that supports decisions being implemented? Is there clarity regarding who can contribute to the process and who has responsibility for making various decisions?
5. Does every staff and other member of the organization understand clearly and feel comfortable with the way decisions are made within your organization?
6. Does everyone within the organization have the opportunity to make suggestions on policy and implementation?
7. Are decisions consistently made on the basis of having all the facts?
8. Do policy decisions anticipate issues that will arise within the organization or are they usually made in response to a crisis that occurred as a result of an absence of policy?
9. Are there clearly specified procedures for presenting business to the board of directors for action?
10. Is there a way for staff to air grievances, suggest fundamental changes, or question leadership without threatening their tenure or position at the organization?
11. Does your organization do a regular assessment of both internal and external opportunities and threats? Strengths and weaknesses?

Leadership:

1. Is effective leadership being provided by the executive director of the organization?
2. Does effective leadership come from more than one source?
3. Is the leadership willing to take risks?
4. Does the leadership provide inspiration?
5. Is the leadership able to help others feel capable and powerful?
6. Does the leadership recognize contributions and celebrate accomplishments?

Personnel:

1. Are the respective roles and responsibilities of board members and organizational staff clearly defined? Are the Board and staff working together cooperatively as a team?
2. Are you attracting and retaining competent and committed staff and board members? Are the right people doing the right jobs?
3. Is the executive director executing policy effectively through his/her staff?
4. Have you written personnel policies, job descriptions and criteria for promotion? Are these policies reviewed and revised as needed?
5. Do personnel policies specify procedures for handling both employee grievances and discipline?

6. Do personnel policies include a performance review system?
7. Does the board of directors have a procedure for conducting a review of the executive director?
8. Does your organization provide opportunities for staff development?
9. Are there mechanisms for recognizing and rewarding personnel?

Organizational Climate:

1. Does your organization provide a constructive environment in which people feel free to take risks and express even unusual or unpopular views? To what extent are minority opinions expressed?
2. Does the organization foster effective team work?
3. Are problems confronted and dealt with constructively rather than ignored?
4. Have effective mechanisms for solving problems that arise within the organization been established?
5. Are social, ethnic, religious, gender, etc. inequalities duplicated within the organization?

Finance:

1. Do you have a realistic resource development program in place?
2. Are your resource development activities yielding adequate resources for the organization?
3. Are accurate and timely financial records maintained?
4. Are resources being allocated effectively?
5. Do you conduct an annual audit?
6. Is a committee of the board designated to oversee the financial administration of your organization, including whether or not you are meeting all legal financial requirements, reporting requirements to funders, etc.?
7. Does the Finance Committee assist staff in developing an annual budget and regularly monitor the organization's expenditures?
8. Does the board approve the annual budget?

Public and Community Relations:

1. Have you conducted a needs assessment in the community you are serving?
2. Do you have a system for obtaining input from individuals and groups affected by your work?
3. Do you cooperate with other organizations that do similar work to that of your own in the same communities?
4. Do you have an effective means of communicating your accomplishments to the community (if they are not readily visible or obvious)?
5. Are you satisfied with the image your organization projects?

Other Evaluation Questions:

1. Is your organization effectively utilizing appropriate technology, computers and other information management systems?

Evaluating an NGO's External Impact

It is impossible to suggest standard questions for evaluating the external impact of an NGO's substantive human rights work since the nature of the work, constituencies, local environments, etc. vary so greatly. However, some general observations based on the experience of human rights groups who have evaluated the effectiveness of their work may generate some ideas. As mentioned above, groups involved in case work can count the number of cases handled, review their outcomes, analyze the results and measure this information against their original forecasts.

For groups engaged in activities that do not lend themselves to easy measurement either because the intended results are not likely to be realized in the first several years of operation (as in the case of human rights education) or because many other factors may contribute to the outcome (as in the case of human rights monitoring), human rights NGOs need to think about incremental measuring devices that will allow them to assess their progress along the way. In the case of human rights education, for example, it might be useful to divide your evaluation into three tiers which assess the accomplishment of short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives. The first or short term question might simply be: was the set of educational activities planned for the first year carried out? Here you would simply quantify things like: how many public meetings were held in which people were presented with human rights principles? How many educational publications were created and how widely were they distributed?

The second tier of evaluation measuring medium-term objectives might examine how well those activities were executed. Human rights educators could, for example, devise workshop evaluation questionnaires that are filled out by participants at the end of training sessions. Such questionnaires might ask how clear presenters were, how useful were the training tools and materials offered, and if the training was relevant to the target group. Workshop organizers might also ask themselves at the conclusion of a training session whether it was done in the native languages of the participants, whether there was a gender and ethnic balance, whether women and minorities took the floor and whether participants' contributions reflected interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Educators might measure the enthusiasm felt by their target groups for the training by noting their level of participation, the number of questions asked, whether any participants requested additional information or followed up with organizers after the training session, and whether any participants expressed interest in becoming human rights educators themselves.

The third tier of evaluation would measure whether the human rights educational training received actually led to any change in the community. Although the most important, this is also the most difficult objective to measure, and one that may take years to realize. In cases where the education is in health, legal literacy or women's rights, it might be possible to examine through interviews with the target community, community leaders and other relevant actors whether those educated are

implementing preventive health strategies and availing themselves more readily of health services. Are community members using the law to solve local problems? Are women asserting their rights through political action, legal cases, the organization of cooperatives or by seeking out special services? The less focused the education provided is, the more difficult this third stage of evaluation will be. If, for example, you are educating people about international human rights law which encompasses a broad range of rights, actions based on this education may be more varied and more difficult to measure. Nonetheless, you might look at whether target communities have documented abuses of political, economic, social or cultural rights using international law as their standard, whether they have organized campaigns around certain rights that are not being respected by your government; or whether attempts to locally implement international law have been made in national and international fora.

Organizations which monitor human rights violations also encounter difficulties in evaluating their work. They may feel, for example, that their work has not been effective if the level or severity of abuses does not decrease. Although it is easy to measure the number of death sentences commuted or prisoners released, it is harder to determine the precise impact you had on an abusive authority's practices, especially if you are one of a number of monitoring organizations in the country. Who is to say whether abuses would have been even harsher and more numerous if not for the existence of your group? In a case like this, you could start by quantifying the basics such as what has been monitored, how many reports have been written or press conferences held, how many reports have been disseminated and to whom, etc. These questions reveal whether or not you carried out the intended programs. To begin the process of evaluating the impact of those programs, you might ask questions such as whether an abusive party responded to your allegations; whether the local and/or international press ran stories using your information; whether you were able to mobilize other local actors to raise your human rights concerns; whether public outrage was mobilized; whether information circulated on abuses was acted upon; etc.

Who is Evaluated?

Most human rights groups felt that everyone in the organization should be subject to evaluation, including the management or leadership.

Who does the Evaluation?

Evaluations can be carried out by the organization itself, by an external consultant, or some combination of the two. One group in Southeast Asia reports calling an independent evaluator in twice a year to chair a day-long meeting. All members of the staff have to be there. Everyone reviews their own goals and objectives from the previous evaluation. They then check which of these have been achieved. If some have not been, they individually and collectively analyze the reasons for this, then set new goals and a time limit for achieving them.

An organization in the Middle East which issues reports on human rights conditions encourages independent bodies to critique its reports and suggest strategies for further developing their group's techniques of gathering and publishing data.

Among the groups interviewed which did regular internal evaluations, the use of an external consultant was rare. One organizational representative with experience in external evaluations, however, stressed the importance of choosing a consultant with an understanding of the specific conditions under which the group being evaluated operates. He noted that the usefulness of an external evaluation can be seriously inhibited by the inappropriate application of "rigid international standards". For example, the balance of power between the board of directors and the secretariat of an organization may necessarily favor the executive director in an organization with a board composed of members appointed primarily on the basis of their high standing in the community, rather than their deep experience in or understanding of human rights. Such a board may not, in the early stages of the organization's development, be suited to take on full policy-making power, and may function more as a body which ratifies or rejects proposals put forward by the executive director. In such a case, a consultant employing rigid standards might fail to appreciate the necessity of this temporarily skewed balance of power and conclude that the secretariat is unaccountable to its board. Such a conclusion would be appropriate, however, if an organization's board is made up of the founders of the group and others with the prerequisite knowledge and experience to set policy and make informed decisions. Since such a board has an equal grasp of the issues which face the organization, it can effectively assume the role of policy and decision making, while the secretariat focuses on implementation.

What can an Evaluation Reveal?

Evaluations can reveal a wide variety of information, such as details of the internal functioning of your organization, how realistic your objectives are, whether you have accurately assessed the needs of the intended beneficiaries of your work, whether your strategies are effective, and how others perceive your work. A group may find, for example, that although its mandate is grassroots empowerment through human rights education, it is focusing all of its resources on policy makers at the top. Another group may find that burn-out and staff turnover are serious problems that affect the continuity of its work. Still another group may find that its efforts to raise awareness about women's rights are resisted by the women themselves, necessitating a modification of strategy.

Whatever the evaluation reveals, it is important to recognize that not achieving all of your predicted outcomes does not necessarily indicate that your organization is not working well. Obstacles often arise which were impossible to anticipate or beyond your organization's control. The key is to identify those obstacles and other inhibiting factors as early as possible, learn from your experience and mistakes, and take corrective action.

NETWORKING & COALITION BUILDING

What are "Networks" and "Coalitions"?

The terms "network" and "coalition" are often used interchangeably, but they can designate two different types of groupings. For the sake of clarity, we are defining "network" as a group of individuals, groups, or institutions which exchange information and/or services. The emphasis in networking is on *exchange*. Networking can be done formally in the context of a network intended to be semi-permanent to which member-organizations belong, or informally when NGOs need something from one another or want to share information, such as about an illegal arrest.

A "coalition" is an alliance of organizations for joint *action*. Like networks, coalitions can exchange information and services, but the emphasis is on *action*. Groups forming a coalition often have come to know each other through past informal cooperation or networking. A coalition may be ad-hoc and temporary, created to allow for the coordinated conduct of a campaign, or permanent and on-going, ready to be used by its associated organizations when the need arises. A coalition might be suddenly established in a crisis, such as in response to a sudden wave of arrests, or perhaps only after considerable thought.

Since coalitions are basically networks that go one step further in providing for action, the rest of this chapter will focus on them exclusively. Much of what follows about coalitions, however, can also be applied to networks.

Why Establish a Coalition?

Coalitions are established when organizations that work in the same or related fields come to the conclusion that their common agendas would be better served by speaking and acting collectively. An effective coalition increases each constituent member's resources by encouraging the optimal use of collective assets. Information, skills, contacts, and constituencies are pooled, and responsibilities are shared. By simultaneously increasing resources and dividing labor, a successful coalition is more powerful and more efficient than would be the case if each group was acting individually.

Other reasons to build a coalition include the following:

1. Speaking with a stronger voice/increasing the pressure:

A coalition of groups, all of which identify the same problem and work toward the same solution, will lend greater visibility and credibility to the issue. This usually results in the issue being taken more seriously by the government, public or other target groups in question. Organizations that rarely or never coordinate their activities may not be seen as making up a significant interest group whose opinions and reactions must be taken into account. In one African country, for example, human rights groups were left out of the country's constituent assembly because they were not seen as a community with common interests, but rather as disparate actors on the national

scene. The fact that other social sectors were given representation in the assembly suggests that had human rights groups been perceived as a community coordinating action on human rights, they would have been included. The experience of being excluded from the constituent assembly led this human rights community to build a formal coalition to avoid being overlooked in the future.

2. Enabling groups whose mandates do not include advocacy to indirectly support advocacy efforts useful to their work through coalition activities:

Organizations which are unable to address individually all the human rights issues that concern them are able to support efforts germane to, but outside of, their own specific mandates through the collective voice of a coalition. Coalition membership may be particularly advantageous to an organization which is small and, though it knows that the realization of the coalition's objectives would aid its own cause, it does not have the means or expertise to tackle these objectives on its own. For example, an institute whose mandate is to study the cultural practices of a particular ethnic group may want to offer its informational resources to and participate in a coalition established to fight discrimination against that group. Likewise, a network of health service providers working in rural areas may want to add its voice and contribute statistics and case studies to a coalition of women's groups advocating for the increased political participation of women because they expect that female politicians will be more sympathetic to women's health issues.

3. Increasing the pool of information and contacts:

Human rights groups can learn a lot from both networks and coalitions through the sharing of experience. Information may be shared on: the substantive findings of each member organization; the experience with individual donors, media, government officials, etc.; how to operate effectively in particular areas and with particular traditional leaders; how to apply for staff training programs; etc.

4. Avoiding duplication of efforts:

By exchanging information and coordinating activities, coalitions help constituent members avoid duplicating each other's efforts. This saves valuable resources which are usually in short supply anyway. For example, in Central Africa a number of organizations determined independently of each other that they needed training manuals for paralegals. Each organization began separate efforts to develop one. This was duplicative and wasteful since one group could have developed the manual and shared it with the others. The other groups then would have been free to work on other projects that could have perhaps benefited the group producing the manual. An effective network or coalition would have informed its members that the manual was already being produced, or made it possible to jointly allocate the tasks of researching and writing the manual.

5. Coordinating quick responses to a crisis:

Coalitions can respond quickly and effectively to crises because mechanisms for coordination among like-minded institutions are already in place.

6. Geographic spread:

A coalition composed of groups from different parts of a country, region, etc. will cover more territory and involve a larger constituency.

7. Creating collective security:

Organizations banding together in a network or coalition usually experience a sense of solidarity and collective courage that is important in the often-risky field of human rights activism. Launching a campaign as a lone organization can be dangerous. In an effective coalition of monitoring groups, however, no government action against one group would pass unchallenged by other NGOs informed through the network or coalition of a repressive action.

8. Funding through a central channel:

Not all coalitions receive outside funding, and it is often unwise to do so. However, coalitions that do seek external funds should know that occasionally donors prefer supporting a collective to individual efforts, especially if they feel that the collective has greater potential to achieve the objectives they are interested in funding. For administrative reasons, donors may also prefer making one big grant over a series of individual ones. Another advantage to receiving funds through a central body is that it allows the coalition more autonomy in rationalizing the flow of funds to constituent groups doing certain types of activities that speak to local priorities. Instead of donors directing agendas from afar, a coalition can draw donor preoccupation and redundant funding away from pet causes. Capable organizations, operating in remote areas or for less-publicized causes, can be nourished as well as those NGOs with established track records that work in hot spots repeatedly in the news. Though groups constantly scrambling for funding may find it difficult to believe, there are established NGOs throughout the world that have to turn down offers of assistance from donors because they have all the support they need to accomplish their objectives for the year. By acting as one, the coalition aids both the human rights cause and the donor by allocating funds to groups involved in relatively unknown efforts that are nonetheless worthy of support.

9. Referrals and recommendations:

Through regular networking and coalition building, NGOs become used to dealing with one another and understand more fully the focus of other groups' activities. Thus, human rights concerns brought to one group that do not fall directly within the scope of its activities (such as information on a recent rights violation brought to a human rights education group) can be referred to more appropriate organizations. Networks and coalitions also create allies who may be willing to recommend

your organization to donors wanting to know how credible and effective your group is and how well you are regarded by your colleagues in the field.

Are there Reasons to Avoid Forming a Coalition?

Although coalitions *can* offer many advantages for constituent groups, their potential is often unfulfilled. If ineffectively set up or managed, coalitions can actually drain individual groups' resources, rather than augment them. In addition, environmental factors beyond the control of coalition members can also derail the effort to act as a collective. Some of the reasons for failed coalitions and/or apprehensions about joining them cited by groups we interviewed follow:

1. Communications barriers:

In countries where phone lines are unreliable or groups do not have a common language, coalitions spanning a large geographic area may have so much difficulty communicating regularly with constituent members that the coalition becomes defunct, or only effectively uses the resources and input of groups that are easily accessible.

2. Credibility:

A human rights group will not want to associate with other groups that it feels could by association damage its credibility (such as a group with a blatantly political agenda or a group that did not have a good reputation for impartiality and truthful reporting).

3. Undemocratic decision-making:

With numerous players and a variety of agendas, squabbles over how decisions are made and who should make them can easily develop and paralyze a coalition. Particularly in coalitions made up of groups that are in varying stages of development, decision-making can become the exclusive purview of one or several groups which are stronger, better connected or better funded. This state of affairs invariably results in resentment and disaffection by others, harming the effectiveness of what is supposed to be a collective effort. A typical example of the kind of breakdown in the decision-making process that can paralyze a coalition was offered by a participant at a recent human rights institution-building training workshop. A large number of human rights and democracy groups in his country decided to form a coalition to address government intransigence on a particular issue. Members of the coalition debated about whether to simply function as an alliance of human rights groups cooperating on an issue of common concern, or to create a formal superstructure that would handle the affairs of the coalition. Some members went ahead and established the superstructure before the membership had conclusively decided on its value, and without consulting the others. As a result, those groups inclined toward the more informal alliance were alienated and lost interest in participating. Subsequently, splits developed within the superstructure itself, and decision-making became the province of a small clique. The coalition was

significantly weakened by the fact that some groups opted out altogether, while others remaining in the coalition ceased to actively participate.

4. Loss of autonomy:

Particularly in the case of a smaller or newer NGO, an organization can become so absorbed in the coalition that it neglects its own mandate and activities. (This can also happen to a more experienced group, especially if it has taken a leadership role in the coalition.) Groups may also avoid association with a coalition because they fear they will have little say in coalition policy making which directly affects the work or fundraising of their own organization.

5. Competition between a coalition and its constituent members:

Coalitions can wind up being counterproductive if their activities come to resemble too closely those of their constituent members. For example, funders encouraged some ten groups which were monitoring conditions in different regions of one African country to form a coalition to facilitate reporting on the human rights situation in the country as a whole. Initially, the coalition merely assembled and edited the reports of its members and took charge of lobbying the national government for improvements. The coalition needed to raise funds for these activities, however, and eventually it established a secretariat, hired staff and presided over its own budget. Over time, the coalition secretariat was very successful in raising more funds, and its staff began undertaking investigative missions of its own throughout the country. Secretariat staff, however, were not able to monitor conditions as effectively as the local members of the coalition because of the secretariat's inferior understanding of the specific regions and lack of contacts. At the same time, the secretariat was now drawing funds for monitoring human rights abuses away from the individual coalition members, making it more difficult for them to carry out their original mandates. Similar stories were reported by two other countries where national coalitions originally established as clearinghouses started to carry out programs that paralleled the work of some of their constituent organizations. As in the first example, the coalitions began to compete for funds instead of attracting new sources of funding and distributing it among its members.

6. Money tensions:

Money—who raises it, who controls it, and how it is allocated—is one of the most common sources of distrust and alienation within a coalition. Sometimes groups which have found dependable sources of funding do not want to share information about them with colleagues who they feel could draw support away from them at a later date. Nor do they think it worthwhile to join a coalition in which they will have to share their resources with other groups less capable of raising funds. Groups with superior fundraising skills who are willing to join a coalition may feel that their superior know-how and finan-

cial contribution to the coalition entitles them to a greater share of power, alienating other members. By the same token, there are groups whose sole reason for joining a coalition is to better their position with external funders and access the financial resources of their colleagues.

How can Effective Coalitions be Built?

As with other areas of institution-building, there is no one way to create a coalition, but there are some common features that, according to our research, seem to characterize the more successful ones. First, a coalition must be stronger than its constituent parts for it to sustain active membership and be attractive to new organizations. The only time that groups maintain an active network or coalition is when some specific interest or concern of all the groups is being served. Members need to feel that there is a high return on their investment in the coalition. Therefore, it is critical that coalitions be designed to be useful, and not created merely because they are fashionable or because networking and cooperative work is seen as being "good" in some vague way. A coalition should have a clearly defined purpose and scope.

Coalitions should determine at the outset not only what they *will* do, but also what they will *not* do. If a coalition tries to do too much, its efforts will become diffuse and will be weakened. A number of human rights advocates with whom we spoke advised groups to start by developing small, focused networks or coalitions based on common mandates such as documentation, human rights education, women's rights, etc. before forging larger ones composed of groups with a range of human rights mandates and a broader agenda. (Some advocates felt that these broader coalitions are never effective except when they form for a limited period of time to campaign for a specific action—to create a mass mobilization against a dictator, for example, or to defeat a specific piece of legislation.)

Ideally, coalitions operate on the basis of written principles which their members are required to adopt according to clearly specified procedures, and avoid action in areas not covered by those principles. Some coalitions even require their members to sign written covenants agreeing to uphold the principles. Coalitions may additionally want to develop mechanisms for allowing their members to "opt out" of positions taken on specific issues, though they support the overall objectives of the coalition. Coalitions must balance, however, the need to acknowledge the diversity of their membership by providing for an "opt out" policy on the one hand, with the need to avoid taking positions that are likely to pit the interests of some members against others on the other.

Coalitions are most likely to succeed when their members are interested in and committed to the coalition's objectives, and willing to contribute the necessary time and energy to their causes. NGOs must identify other organizations which share their belief in advancing the same human rights agenda. This is not to say that coalitions can only be comprised of organizations with the exact same mandate, but groups with differing

priorities from the start may later descend into squabbles over the underlying purpose and fundamental direction that the coalition should take. Unfortunately, human rights NGOs can be as competitive as they are cooperative, and many NGOs have unstated agendas. It is important, therefore, that organizations entering into a coalition be able to trust that any hidden agendas that may exist among group members will not threaten the purpose for which the groups coalesced for joint action in the first place. To prevent this from happening, one East African coalition held a meeting during the planning phase of the coalition and asked potential members to engage in a frank discussion about how they felt they might benefit from the coalition, as well as about the potential areas of conflict they perceived and how such conflicts could be avoided or mitigated.

Having found other organizations with similar values, all groups must agree on the basis on which they will work together and how. Clear policies on leadership and decision-making should be established from the beginning. As earlier noted in the context of building individual human rights institutions, most groups report that successful coalitions have democratic decision-making procedures, and that transparency should be assured by the structure and rules governing process. Veteran coalition builders recommend creating mechanisms for continuing and regularized consultation among member organizations in order to avoid duplication of activities and acrimony caused by the misunderstanding of actions and motives. Depending on the size of the coalition, some form of steering committee which meets more often than the entire coalition membership may be advisable. Such a steering committee, however, should be representative of the coalition as a whole, and although it may make sense at the start for more experienced members to play a leadership role, rotating leadership responsibilities was cited as a major vehicle for ensuring maximum participation and commitment.

Most successful coalitions also have clear criteria for membership and apply it consistently. They devise mechanisms for sustaining the interest and active involvement of this membership by ensuring that everyone has a role to play. A coalition may, for example, establish a number of different committees charged with planning various aspects of the coalition's work, from the recruitment of new members, development of mailing lists and collection of dues, to the development of specific action plans. More experienced groups report that it is usually best if all members participate in one or more committees and are made responsible for drafting policy options for consideration by the coalition as a whole, providing progress reports, etc. Mechanisms such as committee work on specific projects help keep coalition members accountable to each other, and can serve as early warning systems in cases where one organization's failure to pull its weight can by association taint the reputation of other members in the eyes of donors or the communities in which they work.

Finally, successful coalitions are effective in securing commitments of resources from their members. By resources, we do not mean just money, but also time; access; staff; materials; equipment; facilities; etc. Since member organizations will have

varying areas of expertise, financial resources, and time to contribute, it is important that each member be willing to contribute what resources it can and that non-monetary contributions be regarded as equally valuable. In the early stages of coalition building, it may be necessary to rely on volunteers for the day-to-day coordination. Some suggestions offered by a non-profit training organization in the Middle East include recruiting a retired NGO executive, recruiting a graduate student who may be able to receive academic credit for his or her coalition work, or seconding a staff person from one of the coalition's member organizations for a specified period of time. Some coalitions have been able to provide modest salaries or stipends to a coalition coordinator by obtaining a small grant from a foundation or local religious institution, or by pooling membership dues.

Some coalitions establish a formal superstructure with a budget, staff and sometimes even a separate facility. We encountered some divergent views on the advisability of this approach. Most experienced groups with whom we spoke cautioned against the creation of superstructures before demonstrating that the membership is active and committed and the coalition has been successful on a voluntary basis. If coalitions have been able to do this, however, a further point for consideration would be why the superstructure is necessary if success can be achieved without it.

Some groups felt, however, that the nature and size of some coalitions require a more formal administration. For example, a West African coalition of women preparing joint action for the Beijing women's conference in 1995 raised money from external sources which required them to set up a separate bank account to hold the funds. In this case, a superstructure was necessary. The issue of outside funding itself, however, raised concerns for a number of groups who reported that in their experience, such funding often spoiled a coalition by creating tensions within it concerning how the money should be spent and who should control it. It was often better, they noted, to stick to small contributions from the members of the coalition itself. Several activists felt, however, that any funds separately raised for a coalition—whether small or large, or from external or internal sources—ran the very real risk of creating tensions that could paralyze it. Consequently it was best to avoid fundraising altogether.

Several human rights NGOs cautioned against developing regional or international networks or coalitions before demonstrating an ability to build effective cooperation locally and nationally. The inability to develop successful country networks and coalitions would not bode well for groupings of a broader nature, they noted, and could foster tensions between groups working in the same country. Such was the case, for example, when groups participating in a regional or international meeting returned home and hoarded rather than shared with their local colleagues the information acquired. Several experienced coalition builders observed that participation in international networks or coalitions coupled with the failure to establish links with colleagues at home was often a sign of a fractious and competitive, national human rights community. In such cases,

it was possible that certain groups were merely using their membership in international coalitions to elevate themselves over their local colleagues. On the other hand, there might be legitimate reasons for joining an international network but not a local one. You may be the only human rights group operating in a country, or the only one with a mandate suggesting that membership in an international coalition would be useful. Or you may wish to disassociate your organization from other members of your national human rights community if you feel that they are not credible.

Whether a coalition is local, national, regional or international, it should review its progress at regular intervals. The policies necessarily established in the initial planning phase of a coalition need to be reviewed, perhaps after the first six months, to see whether they are working efficiently, and whether all coalition members feel comfortable with the prevailing structure. Members should also be aware that building cooperation and trust, as well as effective procedures and action plans, can take time.

RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NGOS

What are International Human Rights NGOs?

International human rights NGOs (sometimes referred to as INGOs) are NGOs whose human rights mandates extend beyond the borders of the country in which they are based. INGOs engage in a range of activities from monitoring human rights conditions in a particular country, several countries, a region or the world; to promoting efforts in human rights education or women's rights; to empowering people through development activities and/or the provision of technical assistance. Many of the best known human rights INGOs—Amnesty International, The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Women in Law and Development (WILDAF), Human Rights Watch, The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, The International Human Rights Law Group, the U.S. Committee for Refugees, etc.—are based in the North. But there are also INGOs based in Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, including El Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales Alternativos (ILSA), The Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD), The African Center for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, and the Arab Organization of Human Rights. And there are hundreds of INGOs throughout the world that space prevents us from mentioning, many of which are smaller and lesser known than the ones mentioned above.

Relations Between INGOs and Local Groups

Most international NGOs rely heavily on local human rights groups for information, strategic analyses, contacts, and local know-how, though they may collect their own data and establish independent contacts as well. So what can these international groups offer in return? Depending on the nature of

the INGO in question, it may be able to offer financial assistance or access to such assistance; technical and materials support; entree to other national, international and inter-governmental human rights bodies; labor too risky for a local group to perform itself; protection; and/or enhanced credibility.

INGOs often bring financial resources either directly or indirectly to the human rights situations they wish to address. Some INGOs have resources of their own with which they can assist local groups. Most, however, are under-funded themselves and do not have money to give away. However, they tend to have a good sense of where money for particular types of human rights efforts may be sought, and may also have contacts within those funding organizations that can be tremendously useful to local groups. The representation or even recommendation of an international group to a funder, especially in cases where the funder is unfamiliar with the local group, can often mean the difference between serious consideration of a proposal and a form rejection letter. We appreciate the resentment that a number of groups feel about "needing an INGO stamp of approval," which they maintain places them in a dependent and patronized position vis-a-vis international groups. We thought it was important, however, to note the practical reality—that at this time, INGOs are often consulted by funders, and that INGO advocacy can sometimes enhance the prospects for a local group's funding, as well as reduce the amount of time it takes to secure a grant. It should be noted, however, that many human rights groups have raised money successfully without international help.

INGOs may also be useful in offering technical and materials assistance to local groups. INGOs are often in a position to learn about local human rights efforts in other countries and regions of the world, and thus can have an overview perspective that can usefully be shared with the local groups of one country. INGOs may conduct training sessions or provide one-on-one technical assistance to groups themselves, or they may sponsor and/or organize exchanges of information and experience between local groups in different countries. Some INGOs have regular, institutionalized training programs on a variety of human rights topics to which local groups can apply, while others either sponsor or host internships where representatives of local groups may spend varying amounts of time "apprenticing" with a more experienced human rights group. Information on the institutionalized training programs about which we are aware is included in Appendix C, but often training sessions are ad hoc, on-site and organized in response to a particular local problem or request from a local group. Therefore, if you have a particular need which is not addressed by the established training programs, or could be better addressed by a custom-tailored, *in situ* training, it may be worth asking a qualified and sympathetic INGO to help fund-raise for and/or help organize such a session. INGOs can also be excellent sources on which training programs or NGO internships will best address a particular need, and which training programs may have escaped our appendix.

Because INGOs do not operate under the kind of difficult conditions that plague local human rights groups, and because

they usually have better access to working communications systems, libraries and other organizations that generate information and analyses relevant to human rights work, INGOs are in an excellent position to provide materials on or research certain issues for local NGOs. For example, several African and Eastern European countries undergoing transitions from authoritarian rule have asked INGOs to compile for them all information available on how new governments in other parts of the world are dealing with the human rights abusers of past regimes. Similarly, local groups in an Eastern European country interested in the process by which state institutions—such as the police—in other parts of the world can be sued for damages, have asked an INGO to research this for them. Local human rights groups have asked for and received from INGOs information on a wide variety of substantive and administrative subjects ranging from comparative constitutional processes and legal registration requirements for human rights groups, to the experience of mobilizing mass movements on behalf of women and minorities. Naturally, INGOs can also be asked to obtain for local groups materials that already exist such as information on the activities of other groups, human rights educational texts, conference reports, etc.

Similarly, INGOs can help local groups unfamiliar with the international scene to develop contacts with sister organizations in other countries, other INGOs who might be able to provide assistance, and inter-governmental human rights bodies. When local groups do not have the resources to attend an important international meeting, a friendly INGO can usually be depended upon to relay any important information or decisions. When a local NGO does not have the resources to file a communication or otherwise raise an important issue with an inter-governmental human rights body such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights or the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, an INGO can often be persuaded to raise the issues or file a communication on its behalf. Even when a local group is able to participate directly in the sessions of an inter-governmental body, INGOs which have studied or worked closely with these bodies can save the group a lot of time by sharing contacts and information about procedure.

Because of their international status, INGOs are also more immune than local groups to the persecution of governments uncomfortable with human rights work. Governments are generally afraid of the unfavorable international attention and possible retribution that might result from the persecution of citizens from another country. This means that INGOs can sometimes carry out the kind of work that would land a local activist in jail or worse without the same level of risk. Although the discrete expertise and advice of a local group is almost always critical to the success of such an INGO undertaking, certain circumstances could warrant an international group appearing to act alone. In a country where a repressive government is brutally prosecuting a civil war, atrocities are widespread, and local people suspected of sympathizing with the other side are considered expendable, for example, it may be impossible for local activists to safely investigate a massacre or protest viola-

tions. An INGO, on the other hand, may risk little more than deportation in trying to document and object to the event. In cases where it is dangerous for local groups to be seen as disseminating information about human rights, INGOs can also play a useful role in smuggling locally assembled documentation out of the country and disseminating it to the international human rights¹⁶ community for action.

Particularly in situations where activists are operating at great personal risk, being connected to the international community through one or ideally a number of INGOs can be very important for protection. Sometimes the mere knowledge that a local group has international connections will discourage a government from persecution. Where this is not the case, INGOs can and do organize campaigns on behalf of local activists who have gotten into trouble. INGOs may simultaneously deluge a persecuting government with appeals on behalf of an activist, and put pressure on the government's donors and others with significant influence. International campaigns of this sort have shortened jail sentences and saved lives.

Finally, being connected to one or more international NGOs can sometimes help a local group's credibility with its own government. Unfortunately, some governments are loath to take their own human rights communities seriously until they see that they have attracted attention from international actors. International solidarity may add weight to the causes espoused by local groups, particularly if these causes are subsequently seen as part of an international movement that cannot be ignored. Joint missions or activities between local and international groups may help visibly demonstrate the linkage.

Some local groups, however, have had bad experiences with INGOs which have led them to resent both the imbalance of power they feel exists between themselves and their international counterparts, and the dependency they feel some INGOs purposely foster. Two problems typically cited were: 1) the tendency of some INGOs to try to manipulate local group agendas; and 2) the tendency of some INGOs to try to control access to funders and other international actors. Another frustration cited was the phenomenon of "human rights tourism"—when international groups visit a country, take up a lot of local group time, but do not seem to have any real intentions of becoming active in the country. Also noted, but of lesser concern, was the risk that governments would distort local group association with INGOs by accusing them of acting as "foreign agents".

Despite the potential hazards of working with INGOs, groups should be careful not to "throw the baby out with the

bathwater". Knowing the pitfalls of INGO association can help groups avoid them, while at the same time reaping the very real benefits enumerated above. Diversifying your contact with INGOs will make it difficult for any one to control your agenda or funding. Using INGOs for information and assistance that is difficult or impossible to obtain otherwise makes sense; dependency can be minimized by relying on INGOs only for things that cannot be done by local groups. Local groups can also make their objectives and methods clear from the outset, encouraging INGOs to assist and even make suggestions where appropriate, but letting them know that attempts to commandeer policy will not be tolerated.

Finding out about INGOs

Unfortunately, few complete directories of human rights organizations exist. The most comprehensive ones that we know about, however, are compiled by Human Rights Internet in Ottawa, Canada. The directories include local and international groups and are broken down by geographic regions. Copies of the directories are available from:

Human Rights Internet
8 York Street, 2nd Floor
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada, K1N 5S6
Tel: 613-789-7407
Fax: 613-789-7414

Directories go quickly out of date, however, and none will include every organization that focuses on your issue or country. Regional organizations such as the African Center for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, ILSA, ACFOD, WILDAF and others may have more updated contact information on human rights groups in their geographic areas. International funders, development agencies, and other NGOs are also often a good source of information on who your natural allies might be. If you do not have contacts with any such organizations, you can write to Human Rights Internet for information on specific kinds of contacts.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXPANSION

When should an Organization Expand?

Most human rights groups, especially those of indefinite duration with broader agendas, regard organizational expansion as desirable. The chronic NGO condition of being overburdened and understaffed, and the seemingly endless supply of human rights problems groups feel they should be addressing, lead most organizations to yearn for more staff, projects and money. A number of activists stressed the importance, however, of establishing limits on an organization's rate of growth and ultimate size. Organizations should strive, they maintained, for optimal effectiveness, not maximum size. This process would be aided, they suggested, by the recognition that no matter how much groups grow, they will never be able

16. By international human rights community, we mean the community of local, national, regional and international human rights NGOs; inter-governmental human rights bodies such as the United Nations' Human Rights Commission and Center, the Inter-American Commission and Court on human rights, the African Commission for Human and People's Rights and the European human rights Court and Commission; and the donors and governments which at any given time may be concerned about and active on a particular human rights issue.

to address all the human rights problems existing in a country. A young organization's emphasis, they advised, should be on Sustainability and consolidation.

Thus, the timing and nature of expansion should be carefully considered, as failure to do so can result in an organization becoming unmanageable. Countless organizations have been destabilized by expanding too rapidly. Conflicts and unclear lines of responsibility and authority that posed an insignificant problem when an organization was small often become magnified and erupt with the premature influx of additional human and financial resources. Thus, the most important question for an organization to ask itself when considering a major expansion—whether it takes place within the original office or involves the establishment of branch offices—is whether it has reached a sufficient level of institutionalization and developed enough cohesive operating procedures to undertake a smooth transition.

Developing Branch Offices

Organizations with regional, national or international mandates may wish at some point to establish branch offices to better address localized concerns or provide for more direct grassroots involvement. Determining if, when and how to do this can be a tricky business. Some of the following questions may be worth considering:

1. Why is the local office necessary? The answer to this question will help you to determine the best structure to suit your needs.
2. Will the opening of a branch office enhance the overall work of the organization, or is it likely to draw crucial resources away from the central operation, weakening it and its subsequent constituent parts?
3. Are the necessary financial, material, human and equipment resources available?
4. Is the central office in a position to provide the necessary support to a branch office?
5. Has the relationship between the central and branch offices, including roles, mandate, lines of authority and allocation of resources been clearly defined?
6. Will the branch office develop different priorities based on local needs?
7. What role do local branches play in setting central office policy, and vice versa?
8. On what issues is a local group to be autonomous?
9. Will the local branch have its own local advisory board? members? etc.
10. Will local staff be hired and supervised by a local board or by the central office staff or board?
11. What representation will each local branch have on the central board or staff?
12. If local branches are unhappy with central office decisions, what is the procedure for appealing these decisions?
13. Who is permitted to speak on the organization's behalf to the public? Can the central office speak on behalf of local offices and vice versa?
14. What mechanisms for regular communication between the central and local offices will be established?
15. Have possible points of contention/conflicts that might develop between head and branch offices been identified and mechanisms for avoiding and/or handling them devised?

There is always the risk that a branch office will go its own way, creating its own policy, duplicating work of the main office, or expressing independent, even conflicting views from those of the head office. Likewise, local groups risk being dominated by a central office that has little understanding of local realities and is setting policies unsuitable for local conditions. Thinking through how the central and local offices will relate to each other and handle problems that arise before branches are established will help minimize these difficulties.

LOOKING FORWARD

Human rights activists increase their power and effectiveness through solidarity, information sharing, training, and mutual support. Unfortunately, few groups have the resources necessary to regularly exchange experiences and strategies with their colleagues in other parts of the world. Recognizing this difficulty, this project was conceived as a vehicle for allowing activists to teach each other through the written forum of a handbook. We hope that you have found the information contained in this document useful.

This Handbook is intended to be the first and most comprehensive document in a series of shorter, single-issue handbooks which will address human rights institution-building matters in greater detail. We are currently in the process of identifying subjects for the next few handbooks, and would be grateful for your suggestions on priority issues which either were omitted from this first Handbook, or received inadequate attention in it. Several groups have already suggested a more detailed look (including case studies) at local fundraising strategies and the challenges of legally registering human rights NGOs.

We also are eager to receive your comments and criticisms on the content and format of this Handbook. If the observations we have made do not reflect your own experiences or insights, we are especially interested in your comments so that we can include them in any future editions of this text. For your convenience, we have attached included an evaluation form on the following page which we hope you will fill out and return to the address on the back cover of this book. Please be as specific as possible and feel free to add additional pages if the space we have provided is insufficient. You are also encouraged to fill in and send us the questionnaire that appears in Appendix A of this handbook, if you are not one of the groups which has already done so.

We thank you in advance for your feedback, and look forward to hearing from you soon. In the meantime, we wish you the best of luck in establishing and strengthening your human rights organizations!

EVALUATION FORM

1) If this Handbook has been useful to you, can you tell us how?

2) If this Handbook has not been useful to you, can you tell us why?

3) What additions or changes would you make to the Handbook?

4) Do you have any questions on organizational issues that this Handbook did not address adequately or omitted altogether?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: HANDBOOK QUESTIONNAIRE

- o Please write clearly and do not hesitate to use more than the space provided. (Please give as much detail as possible.)
- o With the exception of the first 12 questions, please also feel free to add the experience of other organizations with which you are familiar.
- o We recognize that some of the information we are requesting is very sensitive. Please be assured that your responses will be kept in the strictest confidence; no identifying details will go into the handbook.

1. Name and title of individual completing this questionnaire (Optional):

2. Name and address of organization:

3. Phone _____ Fax _____

4. How long has the organization been in existence? _____

5. How and why you got started: brief description of the organization's objectives, scope (national; regional; local?) and strategies for achieving mandate (Please include brochure if available)

6. Are you urban or rural based? _____

7. How many staff members (please specify full-time and part-time)?

8. What community are you serving?

9. Do all or some of the staff come from the community being served?

10. How many volunteers (please specify full-time and part-time)?

11. Do you have a board of directors? _____ If so, on what basis were they chosen?

12. Are you a membership or non-membership organization? _____

13. How are your activities sustained financially? (i.e. personal funding by the initiators of the organization; membership dues; other local support; funding from national sources including government; international funding; etc.)

14. What factors were considered in determining from which quarters funding would be sought?

15. What, if any, difficulties have you encountered in funding the organization's activities? What resources, information, training etc. might make the job of fundraising easier for you?

16. What factors did you consider when choosing your objectives and mandate? Was sufficient attention devoted to this issue early on?

17. Would you be willing to provide us with a copy of your bylaws for potential use as a model in the handbook? (If so, please enclose.)

18. How did you decide how the organization would be structured?

19. Was extensive thought given to this at the outset? Or did a structure simply evolve? With the benefit of hindsight, if you were to start a new organization now, would you do anything differently?

20. How would you describe your relationship to the government of your country?

21. Has your organization built coalitions or networked with other organizations? (Local? International?)
22. If so, what has been the nature of such coalition building and/or networking? Has it strengthened or debilitated your work? How?
23. Has your organization developed mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of your efforts? If so, can you describe them?
24. What aspects of your planning process would you say have most contributed to your success? What aspects of your planning process have ended up impeding your efforts?
25. What non-organizational problems have impeded the effective functioning of your organization?
26. Has the organization been able to overcome these problems? If so, how? If not, please describe what factors impeded their resolution.
27. How large is your budget? _____
28. Based on your experience, what advice would you give to other/new groups?
29. What kind of help, if any, (information, human or material resources, training, etc.) either from other organizations in the South, and/or from the international human rights/social justice community would be useful for strengthening your efforts?

Thank you very much for your assistance!

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17. This bibliography is an abridged version of the bibliography found in Daniel J. Ravindran, Manuel Guzman, and Babes Ignacio, *Handbook on Fact-Finding and Documentation of Human Rights Violations* (1994). We thank David Weissbrodt for extending his permission to reprint it in this Handbook.

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- Luke Tedeschi, *Methodology in the Forensic Sciences: Documentation of Human Rights Abuses*, 5 American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology 301 (1984).
- United Nations, *Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions* (New York: United Nations, 1991) 71p.
- . *Report of a Preliminary Site Exploration of a Mass Grave Near Vukovar, former Yugoslavia*. U.N. Doc. S/25274, at 25-64) 10 February 1993 (New York: U.N. 1993).

APPENDIX C: HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The following list of organizations provide training programs either:

- 1) in conflict resolution or institution-building for NGOs, whether or not their mandates relate to human rights, or
- 2) in monitoring, documentation, or advocacy for organizations whose mandates explicitly relate to human rights.

This list is adapted from the Directory of Selected Training Programmes on Human Rights, a joint project of the Asia Forum on Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA). Those wishing to obtain copies of the Directory, which provides more detail on the listings below, should write to:

PAHRA
403 FMSG Building, 9 Balete Drive
New Manila, Quezon City, The Philippines

Updated information on course content, program schedules, fees and possible scholarship support can be obtained by calling or writing to the programs directly. The Horn of Africa Program of The Fund for Peace thanks Human Rights Internet for their assistance in updating the information that follows:

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING PROGRAMME

Canadian Human Rights Foundation
1425. boul. Rene-Levesque Ouest
B. 307
Montreal, Quebec H3G 1T7 Canada
Tel: (514)954-0382
Fax: (514)954-0659

HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING GRANTS

International Human Rights Internship Program
Institute of International Education
1400 K Street N.W., Suite 650
Washington, D.C. 20005 U.S.A.
Tel: (202) 682-6540
Fax: (202) 842-1219

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING PROGRAMME

Canadian Human Rights Foundation
3465, Chemin de la Cote-des-Neiges Rm. 30
Montreal, Quebec H3H 1T7 Canada
Tel: (514)932-7826
Fax: (514)932-1892

HUMAN RIGHTS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

International Service for Human Rights
1, Rue de Varembe
P.O. Box 16
CH-1211 Geneva 20 Switzerland
Tel: (41-22)733-51-23
Fax: (41-22)733-08-26

INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME AND VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT SCHEME

International Alert
1 Glyn Street
London SE11 5HT United Kingdom
Tel: (44-71)793-8383
Fax: (44-71)793-7975

INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSE IN HUMAN RIGHTS

Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos
Apartado Postal 10081
1000 San Jose, Costa Rica
Tel: (506)34-04-04
Fax: (506)34-09-55

STUDY SESSION IN HUMAN RIGHTS

International Institute of Human Rights
1, quai Lezay-Marnesia
67000 Strasbourg, France
Tel: (33-88)36-05-50
Fax: (33-88)36-38-55

HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION TRAINING

HURIDOCs Secretariat
2, rue Jean-Jaquet
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: (41-22) 741-1767
Fax: (41-22) 741-1768

PROGRAM ON LEGAL AID AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Free Legal Assistance Group
204 Cabrera II Building
64 Timog Avenue, Quezon City, The Philippines
Tel: (63-2)98-63-92
Fax: (63-2)817-54-10

INDEPENDENT INTERNSHIPS (OCCASIONAL)

Mouvement Burkinabe des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples
01 BP 2055
Ougadougou 01 Burkina Faso
Tel: (26-2)31-31-50
Fax: (26-2)31-32-28

INDEPENDENT INTERNSHIPS (OCCASIONAL)

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights
Studies
Kairaba Ave. K.S.M.D.
Banjul, The Gambia
Tel: (220)39-45-25
Fax: (220)39-49-62

NGO MANAGEMENT/THREE MONTH COURSE

El Taller
B.P. 137
1002 Tunis-Belvedere, Tunisia
Tel: (216-1)752-457
Fax: (216-1)751-570

HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING PROGRAM

Arab Institute for Human Rights
23 Avenue Mohieddine Klibi
El Manar III, 1004 Tunis, Tunisia
Tel: (216-1) 767-003
Fax: (216-1) 750-911

HUMAN RIGHTS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Harvard Law School
Human Rights Program
401 Pound Hall
Harvard Law School
Cambridge, Mass. 02138 U.S.A.
Tel: (617) 495-9362
Fax: (617) 495-1110

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES TRAINING PROGRAM

Center for the Study of Human Rights
Columbia University
1108 International Affairs Building
New York, New York 10027 U.S.A.
Tel: (212)854-2479
Fax: (212)316-4578

DEVELOPMENT, LAW, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2501 LT The Hague
Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague, The Netherlands
Tel: (31-70)4260-799
Fax: (31-70)3549-851

INSTITUTION-BUILDING WORKSHOPS (OCCASIONAL)

Goree Institute Centre for Democracy,
Development and Culture in Africa
B.P. 6413
Dakar, Senegal
Tel: (22-1)21-70-81
Fax: (22-1)22-54-76

CONFLICT RESOLUTION/PEACE EDUCATION

International University of Peoples'
Institutions for Peace c/o Fondazione
Opera Campana dei Caduti
Colle di Miravalle
38068 Rovereto (Trnto) Italy
Tel: (39-464)434-412
Fax: (39-464)434-084

INTERNATIONAL LAW TRAINING COURSES

Diplomacy Training Program
Faculty of Law
University of New South Wales
P.O. Box 1
Kensington, NSW 2033, Australia
Tel: (61-2) 313-6563
Fax: (61-2) 313-7209

NGO INSTITUTION-BUILDING TRAINING (OCCASIONAL COURSES)

Women in Law and Development in Africa
Stenar House, Suite #204
Kaguvu/Speke Ave.
P.O. Box 4622
Harare, Zimbabwe
Tel: (263-4) 729-151
Fax: (263-4) 731-901/2

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING SESSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE TEACHING

International Training Center on Human Rights and
Peace Teaching
5, rue du Simplon
CH-1207 Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: (41-22)736-44-52
Fax: (41-22)736-48-63
Fax: (61-2) 313-7209

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE BYLAWS

CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE Durban, South Africa

1. Name of Organization
 - 1.1 The name of the organization shall be the "Community Law Centre (CLC). The organization shall be affiliated with the University of Natal, Durban, and governed by the CLC Board of Management.
2. Mission Statement
 - 2.1 The CLC is and shall remain an apolitical organization, not supporting partisan politics or any political party. The CLC is dedicated to the empowerment and self-sufficiency of rural communities through development of rule of law and equality before the law.
3. Aims and Objectives
 - 3.1 The CLC aims to empower rural communities through an understanding of law, so they may:
 - o identify and know their rights and obligations under the law;
 - o manage their own legal affairs; and
 - o develop greater self-sufficiency.
 - 3.2 This shall be carried out in an apolitical manner to allow the CLC to serve as great a segment of the South African population as possible.
4. Means of Accomplishing Objectives
 - 4.1 The CLC aims to accomplish its objectives by:
 - o assisting communities to establish paralegal committees to oversee the work of the paralegals;
 - o educating communities about community empowerment and their legal rights;
 - o assisting communities establish paralegal offices; and
 - o training members of rural community members to become paralegals.
 - 4.2 Training of Paralegals

The Training of paralegals shall be conducted in the following manner by the CLC:

 1. Formal educational training in those areas of law of most relevance to the rural communities served by paralegals, and as identified by the paralegal committees. This shall be accomplished through a two-year program which should ultimately lead to a Diploma of Certification awarded by the University of Natal, Durban. Paralegals are committed to two years of service to their communities as set forth in their hiring agreements; and
 2. On-site training and client in-take to help paralegals to hone their legal and administrative skills and deepen their knowledge of the operation of law.
 - 4.3 Paralegal Committees

Paralegal committees shall be established by democratic majority vote by community members in each of the target communities served by the CLC.

The purpose of paralegal committees shall be to:

 1. understand and support the work of paralegals;
 2. generate community awareness of paralegal offices;
 3. arrange workshops to educate community members on relevant legal issues;
 4. set conditions of service, including remuneration to be paid to paralegals;
 5. develop management and supervisory skills to guide the paralegals in their work with the communities;
 6. grasp the operation of the common law and customary legal systems which affect individual lives and overall community health and self-sufficiency; and
 7. understand the importance of litigation and the wise use of this scarce resource.
5. Accountability
 - 5.1 The CLC shall be accountable to the communities it serves through the paralegal committees.
 - 5.2 The CLC shall also be accountable to its Board of Management constituted in terms of 13.1, through quarterly meetings and written reports.
6. Decision-Making Authority
 - 6.1 Decisions affecting the day-to-day operation of the CLC shall be made by the staff of the CLC on a representative basis. Proposals for such decisions shall be brought before the staff or a quorum for full discussion and decision. Decisions shall be made by majority vote; and a quorum shall consist of at least three-quarters of staff members entitled to vote.

- 6.2 The Director shall have the authority to make executive decisions about the daily management of CLC operations. The Director may override staff decisions on grounds of unreasonableness or inequity of staff decisions or streamlining administrative procedures necessary to the efficient operation of the CLC; and shall disclose to and discuss with the staff, or a quorum thereof, any such decisions.
- 6.3 The Board of Management shall have the authority to override the decisions of the staff and/or the Director, but only on the grounds of unreasonableness or inconsistency with established policies of the CLC and the University of Natal.
7. Raising and Expenditure of Funds
 - 7.1 The CLC, as an organization affiliated with the University of Natal, Durban, is funded from private sources.
 - 7.2 The CLC shall be fully and exclusively responsible for the raising of funds, and for the allocation and expenditure of the funds so raised.
 - 7.3 Funds raised by the CLC for its operation shall be kept in a CLC account, administered by the University of Natal, Durban. Such funds shall be managed in terms of the University of Natal's financial accounting procedures. All expenditures must be authorized by the Director and, in addition, either by a properly designated member of the CLC staff or if the amount exceeds R5,000 by the Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Natal, Durban or other properly designated person.
 - 7.4 Strict financial control shall be maintained in accordance with the established accounting procedures of the University of Natal, Durban. The CLC financial year commences on September 1 and ends on 31 August of the following year. The CLC is subject to annual independent audit, conducted at the end of each fiscal year, which is 31 August.
8. Appointment of Staff
 - 8.1 Appointment of staff shall be managed by a properly constituted CLC Selection Committee comprised of CLC staff designated by the Director. All appointments shall be made on the basis of previously established objective criteria and an interview with the designated CLC Selection Committee. All decisions of any CLC Selection Committee shall be subject to review and reversal by the Director, but only on the grounds of unreasonableness or inequity in hiring decisions.
 - 8.2 Subject to Section 9 below, continued employment of any CLC staff members shall be based on the continuing existence of the CLC, sufficient funding, need for a particular position or positions and objective evaluation of employees' job performance. A temporary employee shall have no expectation of continued employment beyond his or her specified term of employment.
9. Disciplinary Proceedings and Dismissal of Staff
 - 9.1 Disciplinary proceedings, including termination, shall in the case of CLC staff be instituted by the Director, and shall be conducted in accordance with the established disciplinary procedures of the University of Natal, Durban. A record of any disciplinary proceedings shall be provided to the Board of Management. The Board of Management may review disciplinary action relating to suspension or termination and shall reserve the right to make a final decision.
 - 9.2 Any dispute between a CLC staff member or members and the Director shall first be subject to resolution by the parties. Where the dispute between the CLC staff member and the Director can not be resolved, it shall be subject to mediation. In the case of an irresolvable dispute between a CLC staff member and the Director and after submitting to the procedures specified herein, the staff member may, in writing, submit his or her complaint and/or request for resolution of the dispute to the Chairman of the Board of Management.
 - 9.3 Should any staff member be suspended from duties during the course of disciplinary proceedings, such staff member shall, for the period of his or her suspension forfeit staff voting rights and any other rights that the Director or Board of Management may determine.
10. Disputes, Mediation and Arbitration
 - 10.1 Internal disputes shall be managed and resolved through the CLC grievance procedure developed and adopted by the CLC staff. Until such time as the CLC has formally adopted a grievance procedure, CLC staff shall be governed by the grievance procedure of the University of Natal, Durban.
 - 10.2 Should any internal dispute prove incapable of resolution, the matter shall be referred by the Director to mediation and, if necessary, to arbitration.
 - 10.3 The mediator or arbitrator shall be selected by the parties to the dispute and, failing agreement between them, shall be appointed by the Director or, in the case of a dispute involving the Director, by the Board of Management.
 - 10.4 Should any matter be referred to mediation or arbitration, the result thereof shall be reported in writing to the Board of Management.
11. Bi-annual Staff Evaluation for Merit and Cost-of-Living Increases
 - 11.1 Bi-annual staff evaluations shall be conducted by a panel of three staff members selected by the staff under the staff evaluation plan to be formally adopted by CLC staff. Such panel shall be selected so as to comprise one representative of administrative clerical staff, one representative of the trainers and one representative of any legal practitioners on the staff. Until such time as the CLC has formally adopted a staff evaluation plan incorporating Sections 11.2 0 11.7, inclusive, the Director, in accordance with procedures established by the University of Natal, shall evaluate staff performance; and the Board of Management, in accordance with procedures established by the University of Natal,

- Durban shall evaluate the Director's performance annually.
- 11.2 The Director shall be excluded from staff evaluation panels.
- 11.3 The panel shall be rotated bi-annually.
- 11.4 No staff member may serve on a panel on which his or her performance is being evaluated.
- 11.5 The review of each staff member's performance shall be based on objective criteria.
- 11.6 Decisions by the panel shall be implemented subject to review by the Director. The Director may override the decisions of the panel on grounds of unreasonableness or inequity.
- 11.7 Any dispute which arises shall be resolved in terms of the dispute procedure referred to in clause 10.
12. Annual Staff Evaluation of the Director for Merit and Cost-of-Living Increases
- 12.1 Annual review of the Director shall be conducted in accordance with the formally adopted staff evaluation plan in Section 11.1 above. Until such time as the staff evaluation plan is formally adopted, the Director's performance shall be reviewed annually by the Board of Management.
- 12.2 The panel shall be rotated annually.
- 12.3 The review of the Director's annual performance shall be based on objective criteria.
- 12.4 Decisions by the panel shall be implemented subject to review by the Board of Management.
- 12.5 In the event of irreconcilable dispute, the matter shall be resolved in terms of the dispute procedure referred to in clause 10.
13. Board of Management
- 13.1 The Board of Management shall be appointed annually and consist of the following:
1. one representative from the rural communities to be democratically elected by all rural paralegal committees of the CLC target communities;
 2. the designate of the Principal of the University of Natal, Durban;
 3. the Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Natal, Durban;
 4. the Director of the Institute of Natural Resources, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg;
 5. the President or his designee of the Natal Law Society; and
 6. an advocate with experience in community legal education.
- 13.2 The Board of Management shall meet quarterly and shall forward the CLC's quarterly reports to the University of Natal Council.
14. Dissolution of the CLC
- 14.1 The CLC shall be dissolved if it no longer possesses the funds to operate or conditions are such that it is impossible for it to operate.
- 14.2 If, upon dissolution, there remain any assets after the satisfaction of all CLC debts, such assets shall be paid or given to an educational fund or trust in the Republic of South Africa and approved by the Minister of Finance, having similar objects and which is authorized to collect contributions in terms of the Fundraising Act No 1978 and is itself exempt from income tax, donations tax and estate duty, as may be selected by a majority of the members of the CLC Board of Management present at the dissolution meeting or in default of such decision as may be decided by the Chairman of the CLC Board of Management.
15. Interpretation of the Constitution
- 15.1 If any ambiguity should arise as to the meaning or interpretation of the Constitution, the Board of Management by majority vote, shall act as arbiter to decide the meaning or interpretation of the clause(s) concerned.
16. Amendments to the Constitution
- 16.1 Amendment to the Constitution may be made upon recommendation of a two-thirds majority of all CLC staff members, and majority vote by the members of the Board of Management. The Board of Management may initiate an amendment to the Constitution by submitting a written proposal to the Director to circulate to CLC staff.
- 16.2 Proposed changes shall be circulated for comment to the staff at least ten days prior to consideration.

AMENDMENT TO COMMUNITY LAW CENTER (CLC) CONSTITUTION

At the CLC Board of Management meeting held on 25 April 1992, the CLC Board of Management voted unanimously to increase the number of rural representatives serving on the CLC Board of Management from one to three democratically elected representatives, to be elected in June of each year. This decision was based on the CLC expansion from five target rural communities to 15 target rural communities, with a population base of approximately 850,000 rural South Africans.

The decision to increase rural representation on the Board of Management necessitated an amendment to the CLC Constitution. After due consideration, the CLC Board of Management, by majority vote, resolved that Article 13 of the CLC Constitution is amended as reflected below:

13. Board of Management

13.1 Except as noted below, the Board of Management shall be appointed annually and consist of the following:

1. three representatives from the rural communities to be democratically elected by all rural paralegal committees of the CLC target communities, such representatives to serve for a period of three years, except that in June 1992 three representatives will be elected to serve terms of one, two and three years, and thereafter representatives will be elected to serve terms of three years each;

The CLC Board of Management further resolved that:

Professor C.F. Cresswell, Vice Principal of the University; of Natal, shall forward this amendment to the University of Natal Council for approval.

These resolutions were approved in their entirety at the 22 July 1992 CLC Board of Management meeting.

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

THE OMINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION
67 Labyrinth Way, Suite 22
Renae, Ominia

For further information contact:
Phalasarna Elyrus (22-12)88-88-88
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, January 7, 1995

NEW WAVE OF ARRESTS CAUSES FEAR OF EXECUTION IN OMINIA

In recent days, The Ominian Human Rights Association has received credible reports indicating that three non-commissioned officers of the Ominian palace guard, as well as two politicians of the Blue Party and a foreigner in transit, were arrested on Friday, January 6, and charged with plotting to overthrow King Madeus. Several highly-placed security sources have privately expressed their doubts that any such coup attempt was being planned and speculated that the regime is simply availing itself of the opportunity to dispose of dissident elements while the world stands transfixed by the natural disaster at nearby Thiaspera. The names of those detained are the following:

Non-Commissioned Officers of the Palace Guard
Hagia Triada
Polyrrhenia Elyrus
Phaestus Aptera
Ominian Civilians
Lyttus Chersonesus, President of the Blue Party
Priansus Lato, Vice-president of the Blue Party
Visitor from Neighboring Artensia
Theseus Atticus

The arrests are the latest in a series of detentions of those who have publicly criticized King Madeus' frequent use of summary executions. The Ominian Human Rights Association fears that the six men detained January 6 are in immediate danger of execution without trial, since this summary treatment has been routine for all those arrested in recent months. According to Phalasarna Elyrus, a spokesperson for the Ominian Human Rights Association, "unconfirmed reports suggest that the allegations against the palace guardsmen have been fabricated as a pretext to implicate the three politicians in a "conspiracy" against the throne. We hope that Ominians everywhere will join us in trying to secure the release of all those detained."

The Ominian Human Rights Association, formed in 1990, works for the release of all prisoners of conscience, fair and prompt trials for those detained, and an end to torture and executions.

APPENDIX F: SOURCES OF FUNDING INFORMATION

Funding Guides

Funding Human Rights: An International Directory of Funding Organizations and Human Rights Awards, Human Rights Internet and The International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Ottawa, 1993. Available from Human Rights Internet, 8 York Street, 2nd Floor, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5S6 Canada.

A Quick Guide to Funding Sources for Human Rights Organizations, The Fund for Peace, New York, 1994. Available from The Fund for Peace, 823 UN Plaza, Suite 717, New York, NY, 10017 USA.

Olson, Stan and Feczko, Margaret Mary, eds., *The Foundation Directory, Part 1 and Part 2*, The Foundation Center, 1993. Part 1 lists foundations whose annual grants total \$200,000 or more, Part 2 lists those whose grants total \$50,000 to \$200,000. Both available from The Foundation Center, 79 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10003-3076 at a cost of \$160 each.

Van Pinxteren, Bert, "Seeking Grants from Embassies" in ECOFORUM, June 1988. Write to ECLI, P.O. Box 72461, Nairobi, Kenya.

Jankowski, Katherine E., *Inside Japanese Support*, The Taft Group, Washington, D.C., 1993.

Corporate Foundation Directory, The Taft Group, Washington, D.C.

The International Foundation Directory, Europa Publications, London, 1979.]

U.S. Non-Profit Organizations in Development Assistance Abroad, Technical Assistance Information Clearinghouse, New York, 1978.

The Foundation Center

A library containing the broadest possible collection of fundraising guides and directories which list grant-making institutions all over the world. The Center has offices in the United States in Washington, D.C., New York, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Cleveland, which are open to human rights activists visiting from overseas. We list the phone numbers of the various offices below:

Cleveland, Ohio	Tel: (216) 861-1933
San Francisco, California	Tel: (415) 397-0902
New York, New York	Tel: (212) 620-4230
Atlanta, Georgia	Tel: (404) 880-0094
Washington, D.C.	Tel: (202) 331-1400

The Fund for Peace
823 United Nations Plaza, Suite 717
New York, NY 10017
Phone: 212-661-5900
Fax: 212-661-5904
E-mail ffpeace@igc.apc.org