# Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division

## Background

The Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division (FOTCD) is composed of three geographic branches and three specialized sections (the National Institutions, Regional Mechanisms and Civil Society Section (NIRMCSS), the Peace Missions Support Section (PMSS) and the Emergency Response Section (ERS)). The Division leads the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at the national, regional and subregional level and supports the work of human rights field presences as they address human rights challenges and seize opportunities to encourage positive change. This work is carried out in close cooperation with national, regional and international partners, including UN partners, government actors, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and civil society organizations. The Division also aims to strengthen national human rights protection systems, promote and implement international human rights norms at the country level and prevent and reduce human rights violations. In addition, the Division supports national-level follow-up action to recommendations issued by the international human rights system,

including the treaty bodies, special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). FOTCD, in cooperation with other parts of the Office, seeks to ensure that national authorities and civil society actors are aware of international human rights standards, know how to translate these standards into laws, regulations and policies at the national level and have the capacity to address human rights concerns. The ultimate objective of this work is to ensure that rights-holders are better protected and empowered.

The ERS plans and supports rapid and effective responses to ongoing, emerging or potential crisis situations, including through the deployment of human rights officers from a roster it maintains. This may be in the context of mandated activities, such as commissions of inquiry or fact-finding missions, due to complex emergencies or natural disasters, or through undertaking preventive action. ERS leads OHCHR's engagement in the UN Operations and Crisis Centre and contributes to the follow-up to the implementation of the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front (HRUF) Action Plan. The ERS leads in the development



Female Police Advisers from UNAMID interact with a Darfuri women's group at the Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced persons, May 2015.

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia meets with prisoners in Koh Kong province, September 2015.

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of new initiatives under the Action Plan, such as the Common UN Information Management System and, in partnership with the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), in the conceptualization and deployment to the field of multidisciplinary "light teams." The PMSS, now located in OHCHR's New York Office (NYO), ensures that the UN peace and security agenda integrates human rights at the political, strategic and operational levels. It also provides strategic advice on human rights in peace operations to OHCHR leadership. The PMSS facilitates the gathering of good practices and the sharing of information among human rights components, including through the maintenance of a resource centre on the integration of human rights in peace missions. The Office's capacities to support NHRIs, regional mechanisms and civil society around the world have been consolidated into the NIRMCSS. This enables the Office to provide coordinated and strategic policy guidance and advice with regard to these areas. Throughout the year, NIRMCSS continued to assist with the establishment and/or strengthening of NHRIs in close cooperation with OHCHR's country and regional offices, human rights components of UN peace missions and human rights advisers (HRAs), including through legal advice and capacity-building activities.

## Results

### Strengthening international human rights mechanisms

▶ *Increased compliance and engagement of Member States with international human rights mechanisms (EA 6)*
OHCHR provided technical assistance, advice and capacity-building to governments, NHRIs, civil society and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) in order to support their implementation of and follow-up to recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms. For instance, the Office facilitated the organization of a human rights orientation programme for 14 participants from various ministries and courts

from the Russian Federation. The programme took place in Geneva, from 9 to 13 November, and increased the awareness of participants about the functioning of the UN human rights mechanisms and strengthened their ability to more effectively follow-up on their recommendations.

▶ *Enhanced synergies, complementarity and coherence within and between human rights mechanisms (EA 9)*
From 2 to 7 November, in the Gambia, OHCHR participated in a dialogue between representatives of the African, Inter-American and UN human rights systems on sexual orientation and gender identity. The dialogue was held in parallel to the 57th ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and provided a forum for a candid exchange on sensitive issues as well as the sharing of experiences and good practices on advancing protection of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons. African Commissioners noted that the strategies and approaches used by the UN and Inter-American mechanisms would be very helpful in their work on LGBTI rights.

### Enhancing equality and countering discrimination

▶ *Legislation, policies and practices increasingly comply with anti-discrimination and equality standards (EA 4)*
Significant advocacy was undertaken by OHCHR on human rights situations related to discrimination, including on cases concerning caste, gender equality and religious identity. As an example, OHCHR supported the UNCT in Nepal to better integrate the human rights issues of Dalits, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples in their work, including through a technical workshop and round table discussion during which the Secretary-General's Guidance Note on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities was shared and discussed. As a result, there has been an improvement in the extent to which policies and practices in Nepal address discrimination. Additionally, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 28/6 on 26 March to establish the mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights of persons with albinism. In accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 26/10, OHCHR prepared a background paper on the initiatives that have been taken to raise awareness and promote the protection of the rights of persons with albinism. It also launched an information campaign to raise awareness about the issue and spearheaded the organization of a number of events to mark the celebration of the first International Albinism Day on 13 June.

▶ *National human rights institutions and civil society create and support participatory mechanisms to enhance equality and counter discrimination (EA 5)*

In the context of the deployment of a light team to Burkina Faso under the HRUF Action Plan, the Office promoted the increased participation of women in decision-making processes by partnering with a coalition of women's organizations to monitor gender-related issues and women's participation in political life and elections.

▶ *Increased integration of human rights in international and regional processes relevant to migration (EA 10)*

OHCHR has been closely following developments in the context of the migration crisis in Europe. On several occasions, the High Commissioner has publicly voiced concerns about the human rights of migrants and refugees. The Office has engaged with Member States and other stakeholders, both from Geneva and its field presences across the region, to address migration concerns. In November, OHCHR proposed to deploy a mission to conduct human rights monitoring, protection, needs assessment and reporting activities, in partnership with all relevant UN system partners and other actors. Following these discussions, advance missions were dispatched to Greece from 8 to 11 November and Bulgaria from 29 November to 2 December.

## Combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law

▶ *Increased number of States that have abolished the death penalty and/or, pending abolition, increasingly comply with relevant international human rights obligations (EA 1)*

The High Commissioner addressed the issue of the death penalty on several occasions and in various fora. In the United States of America, there has been a steady decline in the number of executions over the past six years; from 52 executions in 2009 to 28 in 2015. In May, the Congress of Nebraska decided to abolish the death penalty and, in a decision adopted in August, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty violates the state Constitution. OHCHR also engaged with the Mongolian Government on the abolition of the death penalty. On 3 December, the Parliament of Mongolia voted to adopt a new Criminal Code that abolishes the death penalty for all crimes, in accordance with the Government's commitments undertaken during its second UPR cycle in 2015. Furthermore, in Bangladesh, the Supreme Court declared the mandatory imposition of the death penalty under section 6 (2) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 1995 to be unconstitutional.

### Registration of indigenous peoples in Panama

During 2014 and 2015, OHCHR assisted Panama's Electoral Tribunal to promote the registration of births in the indigenous Ngäbe-Bugle communities of the Mama Tata religion in Panama. Through a project that was funded by the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance for the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review to support the implementation of recommendations issued by human rights mechanisms to Panama, the Office and the Electoral Tribunal conducted an investigation to understand why many Mama Tata followers are reluctant to register births in their communities. Some of the reasons given included erroneous beliefs about the potentially negative consequences of registration and a deep-seated distrust of the State based on the long-standing situation of abandonment felt by the indigenous population. In the context of the project, trust-building activities were undertaken between the Electoral Tribunal and the Mama Tata religious leaders which led to a series of registration missions to the communities. Eight communities in the Chiriqui and Bocas del Toro areas have now been reached by members of the Electoral Tribunal.

▶ *Transitional justice mechanisms established and increasingly operating in accordance with international human rights norms, standards and good practices (EA 3)*

In Nepal, OHCHR's technical analysis of the legislation establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission on the Investigation of Disappeared Persons was taken into consideration and referenced in the decision of the Supreme Court to strike down



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The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights meets with representatives of civil society during a visit to Baidoa, Somalia, November 2015.

## Claiming the right to food in Guatemala

At the end of 2015, the Guatemalan authorities entered the final phase of developing a protocol for the exercise of the right to food, which provides for an administrative complaint procedure and an inter-institutional process when the right to food is violated. Both the complaint procedure and the reparation measures will be coordinated at the local level, ensuring that the mechanism is available to everyone. This is the result of a struggle initiated in 2011 when four indigenous Maya Ch'orti' families, whose children were suffering from acute and chronic malnutrition, submitted a judicial complaint arguing that this constituted a human rights violation.

In 2011, civil society organizations working on the "Guatemala without Hunger" campaign assisted the four indigenous families to submit the complaint on the grounds that a number of their children's human rights had been violated. OHCHR provided technical assistance to the judiciary on international human rights standards related to the right to food.

In an unprecedented decision that was handed down in 2013, a court held that the State of Guatemala was responsible by omission for the violation of the children's rights to food, life, health, education, adequate housing and work. The court ordered 13 State institutions to comply with 20 measures in order to prevent further violations of the rights of the child. The Secretariat of Food and Nutritional Security, for example, was tasked with elaborating and implementing the abovementioned protocol for the exercise of the human right to food.

OHCHR collaborated with the Secretariat to support the elaboration of the protocol and ensure that human rights standards were duly integrated. On 9 November, OHCHR and the Secretariat to the Vice-Presidential Cabinet on Food and Nutritional Security presented the final version of the protocol. It is expected that it will be approved and implemented in 2016.

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the amnesty clauses in these laws. Subsequently, OHCHR closely collaborated with the UN and civil society in Nepal to provide guidance on their engagement with the transitional justice process, thereby ensuring clarity on international norms and standards and the adoption and application of a coherent approach. The report of the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka, mandated by the Human Rights Council, led to a resolution that was adopted by consensus on accountability for the human rights violations that were allegedly committed during the Sri Lankan civil war. OHCHR worked closely with the Government,

civil society and the UNCT to develop and implement a credible transitional justice process.

### Integrating human rights in development and in the economic sphere

▶ *Human rights standards and principles are integrated into UN development frameworks and the work of UN agencies, particularly on housing, water, sanitation and land (EA 11)*

As a result of the support provided by OHCHR from headquarters and its field presences in Asia, the capacity of UNCTs to apply a human rights-based approach (HRBA) was enhanced in countries that began the roll-out of their United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in 2015, including Bangladesh, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Iran, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Thailand and Viet Nam. In Europe and Central Asia, OHCHR provided inputs for the finalization of UNDAF documents in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo[11], Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. It also helped prepare road maps for the new UNDAF roll-outs in Albania and Montenegro, including through the provision of advice on a HRBA and inputs to country analyses and other documents.



Participants of a workshop on the promotion and protection of human rights for journalists and human rights defenders in South Sudan, April 2015.

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[11] Reference to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

## Widening the democratic space

▶ *National human rights institutions established and effectively functioning in accordance with the Paris Principles and other relevant international standards and recommendations (EA 1)*
OHCHR supported the establishment and/or strengthening of 71 NHRIs by working with relevant stakeholders to emphasize the added value of having a NHRI that is compliant with the Paris Principles and outline the roles and responsibilities of an NHRI in promoting and protecting human rights. As the Secretariat of the International Coordinating Committee, FOTCD provided substantial support to the review of 24 NHRIs by the Sub-Committee on Accreditation. It also provided expert advice to support NHRIs in their interaction with the human rights mechanisms. As a result, 49 written statements and 50 oral statements were delivered by NHRIs at sessions of the Human Rights Council. A total of 19 of these statements were video statements. Moreover, 55 alternative reports were submitted by NHRIs to various treaty bodies. In addition, FOTCD continued to offer a fellowship programme for staff of NHRIs. During 2015, fellows from NHRIs in Albania, Egypt, Indonesia, Portugal and the Russian Federation participated in the programme, thereby contributing to building their national capacities.



Members of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation visit a resettlement site in Cambodia, February 2015.

Guinea to monitor the human rights situation throughout the October presidential elections. The human rights officers worked in cooperation with 115 local election monitors who were trained and coordinated by the OHCHR country office in Guinea.

▶ *Increased responsiveness of the international community to potential, emerging or existing human rights crisis situations, with human rights protection as an integral element of this response (EA 10)*
Significant support was provided by FOTCD to investigations that were carried out pursuant to resolutions of the Human Rights Council on Iraq and Libya. This reflected an increased responsiveness of the international community to ensure greater accountability for gross human rights violations. These initiatives have led to a better understanding and awareness of the human rights concerns that are at stake in both crises. The Office deployed more than 80 staff members to provide support in relation to various crises and mandates, including commissions of inquiry (Eritrea, Gaza and Syria), fact-finding missions (Central African Republic, Iraq, Libya and South Sudan), and humanitarian missions (Mauritania, Nepal, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen). In the case of Syria, OHCHR's engagement with humanitarian actors led to the inclusion of human rights concerns in the Strategic Response Plan and the Humanitarian Process Cycle.

In coordination with DPA and in the context of the HRUF Action Plan, OHCHR developed the idea of deploying light teams as part of a new mechanism to get capacity on the ground in response to emerging or actual crisis situations. In 2015, the first light teams were deployed to Burkina Faso, Lesotho and Nigeria. In responding

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**Creation of youth human rights clubs in Senegal**

In April, the OHCHR Regional Office for West Africa organized a training event on the education of girls at the Lycée CEM des Martyrs of Thiaroye, a high school in the suburbs of Dakar. Following this engagement, a human rights club was created, which currently has 20 active student members who are greatly involved in the promotion of human rights at the school through a number of means, such as painting, the production of texts, plays and poems on diverse human rights topics. The Regional Office is promoting the creation of similar clubs in other schools that will get involved with the promotion and protection of human rights in Senegal.

## Early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity

▶ *Legal frameworks, public policies, State institutions and non-State actors that are engaged in or regulating situations of conflict, violence and insecurity increasingly comply with international human rights standards (EA 1)*
In the context of potential electoral violence, OHCHR deployed four human rights officers to

to unrest in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a joint OHCHR-DPA mission was deployed, in May, to undertake a first-hand assessment of the situation in the country and formulate recommendations for follow-up by the Government, the UN system and the international community. Also, under the HRUF Action Plan, the Office led an Inter-Agency Task Force on the development of a comprehensive proposal for the establishment of a common UN information management system on violations. The final report, which was presented to the Deputy Secretary-General in November, promotes UN preventive action and early response and offers concrete suggestions to significantly improve the manner in which human rights early warning information is managed.

▶ *The protection of human rights is an integral part of the international community's preparedness, response and recovery efforts in the context of humanitarian crises and is effectively integrated into the mandates, policies and actions of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions (EA 11)*
The establishment of the Peace Missions Support Section in New York positively contributed to OHCHR's efforts to encourage the integration of human rights considerations in the UN's preparedness and response to conflict, notably in the context of peace operations. OHCHR's regular participation in integrated task force meetings directly impacted on mission planning processes by ensuring that human rights considerations and analyses were incorporated in decision-making processes. This engagement also resulted in a significant improvement in the early and systematic inclusion of human rights considerations in planning, the development of mission concepts, staffing discussions and budgetary processes of DPA, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support.

## Global Management Outputs

**A gender perspective is effectively integrated into all OHCHR policies, programmes and relevant processes (GMO 3)**

▶ Gender considerations were integrated in the work of the Division and information on gender-related issues was regularly shared with field presences. A gender perspective has been mainstreamed in the Office's interventions in the context of elections, security sector reform, human rights monitoring and the implementation of the HRUF Action Plan. As an example, transitional justice work in Nepal and Sri Lanka included a gender focus to ensure that OHCHR's

work includes and reflects the voices of women when preparing for concrete transitional justice outcomes.

**Increased effectiveness in supporting human rights mechanisms (GMO 4)**

▶ In March, the Human Rights Council requested that the High Commissioner dispatch a mission to investigate all violations and abuses that have been committed in Libya since the beginning of 2014. FOTCD provided substantive, logistical and administrative support for the deployment of the mission and closely coordinated with the OHCHR Office in Tunisia and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya.

**Increased effectiveness in supporting field operations (GMO 5)**

▶ Work for the development of guidance to strengthen the capacity of OHCHR field presences to plan and implement technical cooperation projects continued throughout 2015. The tool is being developed by FOTCD with the advice of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation and in close cooperation with field presences.

▶ FOTCD ensured the timely recruitment and deployment of HRAs in line with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Strategy for the Deployment of Human Rights Advisers. In 2015, OHCHR supported 28 HRAs across multiple regions.

▶ The Division managed the deployment of more than 80 staff members in response to various crises and to support a number of special procedures mandates, including in the context of commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and humanitarian response.



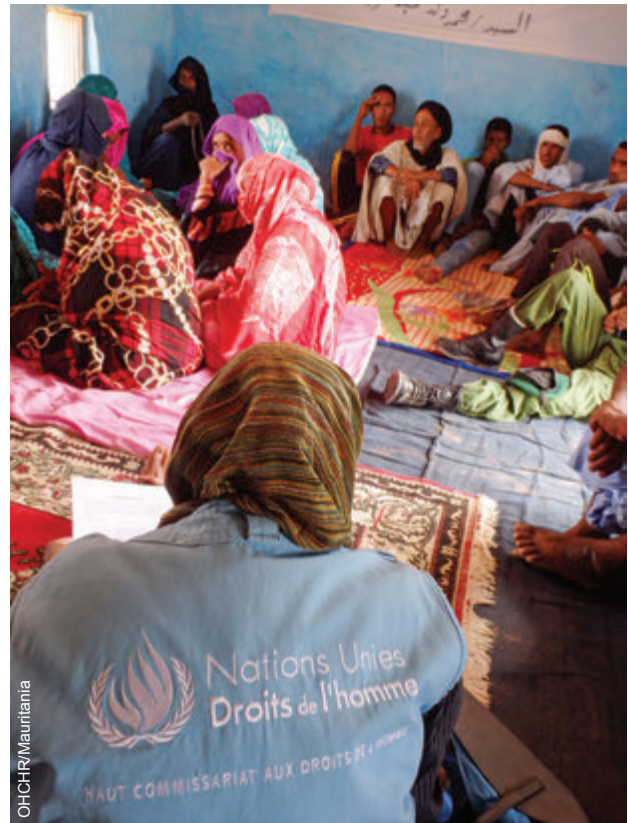OHCHR monitored the peaceful protests against corruption and impunity in Guatemala, April 2015.

▶ A meeting of the Heads of field presences was organized in Geneva from 1 to 5 June to discuss the overall vision, priorities and agenda for the coming years. The meeting was also called to ensure that the Heads of field presences were updated on major policy developments, in particular the HRUF Action Plan and the post-2015 development agenda.

**OHCHR staff has the necessary competencies and skills to effectively implement the OHCHR programme (GMO 6)**

▶ FOTCD facilitated a series of tailor-made workshops on protection strategies for a number of field presences (Bolivia, Burundi, Cambodia and the Regional Office for South-East Asia). The workshops were adapted according to country-specific circumstances and requirements and were designed to strengthen their capacities on the ground to engage with State actors and civil society in all activities. The training focused on making practical use of their knowledge and analysis about their respective human rights situations to develop sound support programmes at the national level, including through technical cooperation and advisory services. Particular emphasis was placed on the strengthening of local capacities to ensure the sustainability of the programmes.

**Improved awareness and understanding of and support to OHCHR's mission and programme by Member States and other stakeholders (GMO 7)**

▶ Together with the country office in Tunisia, FOTCD supported the High Commissioner's visit



OHCHR staff member meeting with villagers in the south of Mauritania to assess their protection needs, April 2015.

to Tunis from 19-20 April. During the mission, the High Commissioner highlighted Tunisia's achievements and promoted the positive aspects of the Tunisian experience as a model for other countries in the region. Several national interlocutors noted their strong cooperation with OHCHR and welcomed its support.