

# OHCHR's approach to field work

## Background

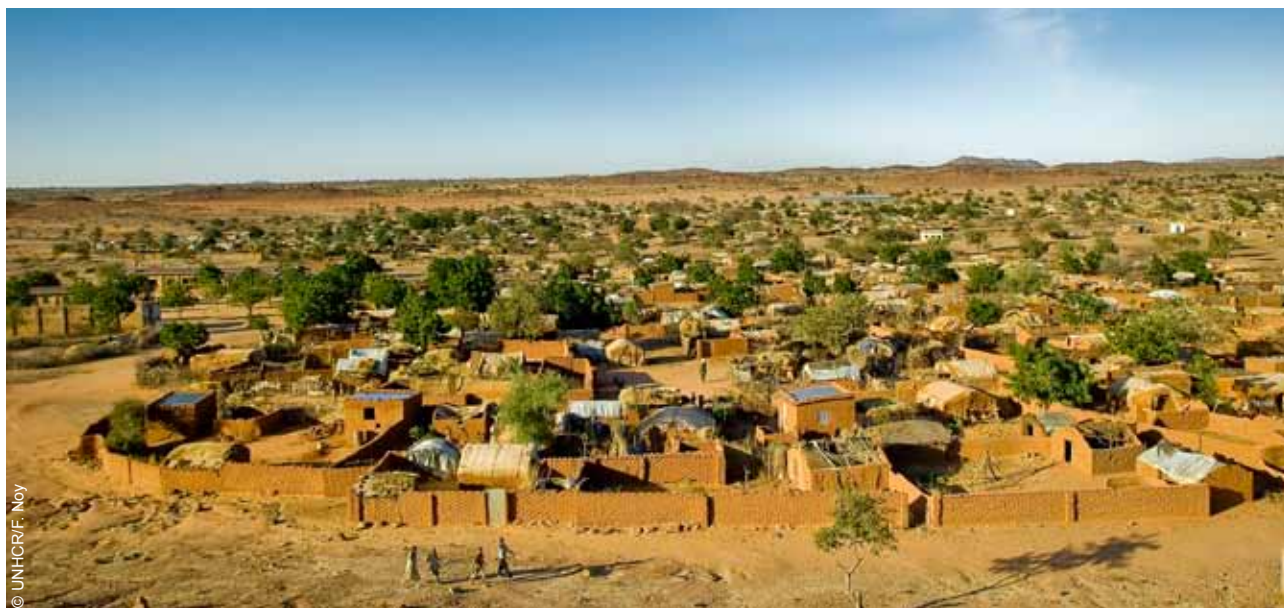
Supporting the work of human rights field presences is the main function of OHCHR's Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division (FOTCD), in cooperation with other parts of the Office.

Based on dialogue with national counterparts, the Office's activities at country level (through headquarters or field presences) focus on the promotion and protection of human rights, including by preventing and reducing human rights violations. This occurs mainly through strengthening national protection systems which involves ensuring that government authorities are aware of their human rights obligations and supporting them in their implementation and by designing effective remedies to overcome obstacles to the realization of human rights. Through its programmes in the field, OHCHR likewise seeks to ensure that national authorities and civil society actors have the capacity to address human rights concerns and are better informed about international human rights standards and how to translate these into laws, regulations and policies so that rights-holders are better protected and empowered. In particular, OHCHR supports efforts to establish or strengthen justice and accountability mechanisms at the national level, including through strengthened monitoring and investigation and redress of violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

In 2012, OHCHR discontinued its operations in Nepal and the Great Lakes and established a new country office in Yemen (March) and a new Human Rights Adviser (HRA) in the Maldives (November). The new Regional Office for North Africa opened in June 2012, temporarily conducting operations from Tunisia. A new peace mission with a human rights component in Syria was operational from May to August 2012. The peace mission in Timor-Leste was closed at the end of 2012 and OHCHR plans to deploy a Human Rights Adviser within the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Timor-Leste during the course of 2013. The deployment of human rights advisers to Malawi and Mali are also envisaged for 2013. At the end of 2012, OHCHR was running or supporting 59 field presences and supported other members of the UN family through rapid deployment.

## Types of field presences

OHCHR field presences fall into two categories: stand-alone presences and collaborative arrangements. The first category comprises those offices under the direct supervision of OHCHR, namely country and regional offices. The second category comprises field presences with double reporting lines, namely, human rights components of peace or political missions who report to the head of the mission and the High Commissioner, and human



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rights advisers in UNCTs who report to the UN Resident Coordinator and the High Commissioner. The decision to establish an OHCHR country or regional presence is made with the concerned government, taking into account the overall human rights situation, security considerations, the presence and role of other international actors on the ground, as well as available human and financial resources, administrative arrangements and the scope of activities to be undertaken.

## Country and stand-alone Offices

OHCHR country and stand-alone offices are established on the basis of a standard agreement between OHCHR and the host government. A mandate typically includes human rights monitoring, protection, technical cooperation activities and public reporting and is tailored to a specific country situation. These offices are primarily funded through voluntary contributions.

OHCHR has 13 country or stand-alone offices which are comprised of 12 country offices in Bolivia, Cambodia, Colombia, Guatemala, Guinea, Mauritania, Mexico, State of Palestine<sup>1</sup>, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Yemen and one stand-alone office in Kosovo.<sup>2</sup>

## Regional Offices and Centres

Regional offices are similarly established on the basis of an agreement with a host government and in consultation with other countries in the region. These offices focus on cross-cutting regional human rights concerns and play an important role in supporting governments in their engagement with the UN human rights mechanisms (treaty bodies, special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review). They work closely with regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and civil society. Regional offices complement the expertise of OHCHR country offices by providing support on institutional and thematic issues.

In addition to the regional offices, OHCHR has regional centres that are established in accordance

with a General Assembly resolution and are imbued with a specific mandate. Regional offices and centres are funded by the UN regular budget and voluntary contributions.

OHCHR has 13 regional presences which include 10 regional offices in East Africa (Addis Ababa), Southern Africa (Pretoria), West Africa (Dakar), South-East Asia (Bangkok), the Pacific (Suva), the Middle East (Beirut), Central Asia (Bishkek), Europe (Brussels), Central America (Panama City), South America (Santiago de Chile), a subregional centre for human rights and democracy for Central Africa (Yaoundé) and a Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region (Doha). The new Regional Office for North Africa has temporarily been conducting its activities from Tunisia.

## Human rights components of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions

OHCHR supports human rights components of peacekeeping and political missions by providing strategic and expert advice, technical assistance, operational support and day-to-day backstopping on human rights issues. In this context, the Office participates in interdepartmental technical assessment missions for the design, establishment and reconfiguration of peace missions. Additionally, OHCHR contributes, through its voluntary contributions, to the implementation of technical cooperation activities and projects.

While most of the human rights staff in peace missions are contracted by the Department of Field Support and report to the peace missions, the Head of a human rights component acts as the representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the country and has a dual reporting line, both to the Head of the Mission and to the High Commissioner. In accordance with UN Security Council Mandates, typical functions of a human rights component may include:

- ▶ Monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation and investigating human rights violations;
- ▶ Advocating for peace processes to be inclusive, addressing past human rights violations and protecting and promoting human rights;
- ▶ Integrating human rights in legislative and institutional reforms, including the rule of law and security sectors reforms;

<sup>1</sup> Reference to the State of Palestine shall be understood in compliance with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/19.

<sup>2</sup> References to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population shall be understood in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

- ▶ Preventing and redressing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, with a focus on the protection of civilians;
- ▶ Building human rights capacities and institutions; and
- ▶ Mainstreaming human rights into all UN programmes and activities.

Fifteen UN peace missions have a human rights component and incorporate human rights promotion and protection into their mandated work, namely in: Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, Liberia, Libya, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur) and Timor-Leste.

### Human Rights Advisers in UN Country Teams

Human rights advisers are deployed at the request of UN Resident Coordinators on behalf of the UNCTs. Advisers support and assist the Resident Coordinators, Heads of UN agencies and members of UNCTs to integrate human rights in their programming strategies and implementation and build and strengthen national human rights capacities. Other functions include:

- ▶ Advising and providing training to independent national human rights institutions and other stakeholders;
- ▶ Advising duty-bearers on how to promote UN normative values;
- ▶ Building networks with, and providing practical support to, civil society actors;
- ▶ Providing operational support to human rights training and/or national capacity-building activities; and
- ▶ When applicable, advising on integrating human rights in humanitarian response and post-crisis recovery processes.

Human rights advisers are normally funded through extrabudgetary contributions. In some instances, cost-sharing agreements have been concluded with UNDP or relevant UNCTs and other UN entities at the country level.

In 2012, new HRA positions were funded through a Multi-Partner Trust Fund established under the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism (UNDG-HRM) chaired by OHCHR, to respond to the requests from Resident Coordinators and UNCTs. In January 2012, the UNDG endorsed a strategy for the deployment of human rights advisers and in December three new deployments were approved by the UNDG-HRM.

New requests were reviewed by the UNDG-HRM in early 2013.

OHCHR has 18 human rights advisers in Chad, Ecuador, Honduras, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Niger, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Serbia, Sri Lanka, the Southern Caucasus (based in Tbilisi and covering Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine. The recruitment of three new HRAs for Timor-Leste, Malawi and Mali is underway.

### Engagement in Humanitarian Action

At the global level, OHCHR integrates human rights considerations and advocates for the adoption of a human rights-based approach into the strategies and policies of humanitarian initiatives through its engagement in a number of inter-agency mechanisms. These include the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), particularly its Principals and Working Group and its subsidiary bodies, such as the IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning, and the Humanitarian Coordinators Group, as well as the Global Protection Cluster Working Group and its Protection Capacity Steering Committee (ProCap). At the field level, as a member of Humanitarian Country Teams and Protection Clusters, OHCHR is increasingly involved in humanitarian preparedness and response activities in both conflict crises and natural disasters, including by participating in the development of Common Humanitarian Action Plans, Flash Appeals and Consolidated Appeals Processes (CAPs). OHCHR's participation in CAPs has benefited from more coordinated support from headquarters and streamlining within budgetary and strategic planning processes. In addition, OHCHR continued to lead Protection Clusters in complex and challenging situations, including Haiti, the Pacific (jointly with UNHCR) and the State of Palestine. OHCHR has recently taken on leadership of the Protection Cluster in Mauritania. Beyond Protection Cluster leadership, OHCHR is actively engaged in field Protection Clusters (formally established or de facto) in Afghanistan, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda. Six regional offices participate in regional protection mechanisms and/or Protection Clusters in countries under their purview: Central America, Central Asia, the Pacific, Southern Africa, South-East Asia and West Africa. OHCHR continues to work on the implementation of the office-wide Strategy and Four-Year Action Plan on Engagement in Humanitarian Action.