



NEWSLETTER

July – September 2015

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Promoting Human Rights in Africa

Message from the Executive Director

I am pleased to share with you our third quarterly newsletter for 2015. Here you will find articles on the different and interesting ways Africa National Human Rights Institutions are furthering NANHRIs vision of ensuring “A continent with effective NHRIs; contributing to an enhanced human rights culture and justice for everyone within the region”.

With 44 members and several partners and stakeholders in Africa and internationally, we hope this newsletter will serve as one of the ways to help you keep connected with NANHRI and to find the many opportunities in which we can work together in Africa and beyond.

Increasingly, we are adopting training methodologies that will enable us counter increasing resource challenges and to also take advantage of expanding opportunities especially in the area of ICT. Among these methodologies include the blended learning approach which enables NANHRI to reach a wider membership by using already available resources such as the internet. This is particularly relevant given our renewed strategic focus.

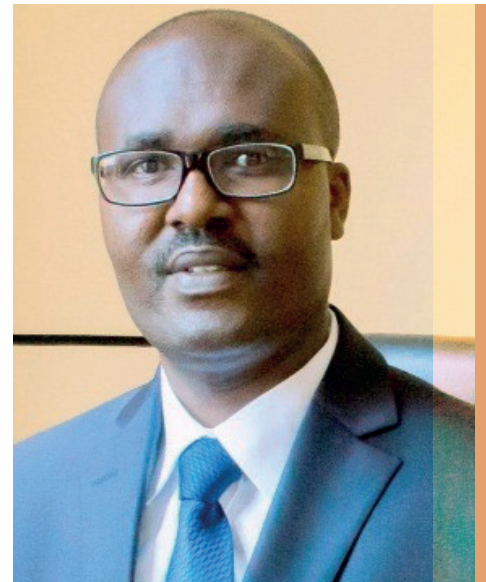
We look forward to your cooperation and assistance as we gear towards the end of the year. We also look forward to hearing your stories and ideas for upcoming issues and welcome your ideas and feedback.

Please feel free to contact:

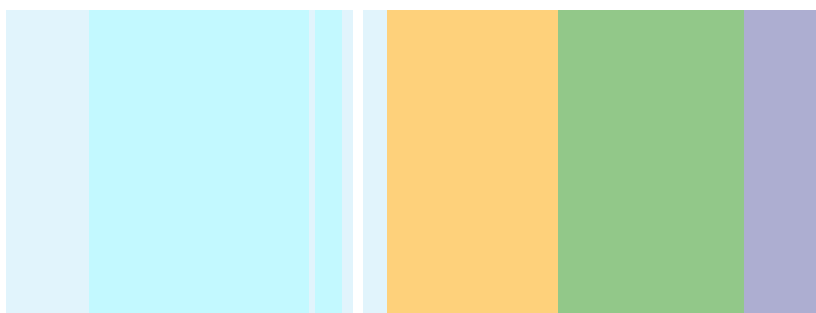
Gilbert Sebihogo gsebihogo@nanhri.org and engage us on twitter @NANHRI40, Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/NANHRI?fref=ts> to find out more information on any of our programming.

Sincerely

Gilbert Sebihogo,
Executive Director, NANHRI



Secretariat News



Study on the state of NHRIs in Africa

Together with the United Nations Development Programme, NANHRI commissioned a study on the State of National Human Rights Institutions in Africa. This study focused on 6 key areas: establishment and oversight; independence; financing; capacity; stakeholder engagement; and rights-based service delivery and development.

Nine(9) national human rights institutions; Kenya National Commission on human rights, South African human rights Commission, Tanzania Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance, Commission for Human Rights of Rwanda, Independent National Commission on Human Rights in Burundi, The National Human Rights Commission of Seychelles, Mozambique Human Rights Commission, The National Human

Rights Council of Egypt and Comité Supérieur des Droits de l'Homme et des Libertés Fondamentales de Tunisie participated in this study.

For the purposes of ensuring a detailed and comprehensive report, the study employed the following approach:

- An inception meeting with a reference group that included representatives of African NHRIs, human rights experts in Africa and internationally
- A review of available literature regarding state of NHRIs in Africa, as well as current and historical human rights issues and social-political context of each of the 9 NHRIs
- Engagement with key stakeholders as well as development and distribution of self-assessment questionnaires

NANHRI 10th Biennial Conference and Closing Meeting of the APT-NANHRI project

Torture and other ill-treatment remains a widespread problem across Africa. Efforts towards its eradication is complicated by the fact that some public officials responsible for upholding and protecting the law are the ones who are involved in the use of, or tolerance towards, torture and other ill-treatment.

Aware that efforts to eradicate torture are complex and require cooperation and innovation from all relevant stakeholders, including national human rights institutions NANHRI and APT partnered in a three year project dubbed "A continent United against Torture." This project aimed at strengthening the role and capacity of African NHRIs to prevent torture both as national institutions as well as members of a regional network.

The project was launched in Morocco in 2013. The project included two blended learning' activities on detention monitoring, held for Anglophone NHRIs in Uganda and for francophone institutions in Togo. It also involved three training activities on: investigating allegations of torture (South Africa); training of public officials (Cameroon); and reducing the overuse of pre-trial detention (Rwanda).

As the project comes to an end NANHRI and APT are organising a high level closing conference for 44 NHRIs across Africa to document, reflect, share experiences, best practises and lessons learnt during the implementation of the project. The closing conference will take place in the framework of the 10th biennial conference of the NANHRI on 21-23 October 2015.

Objectives of the Conference will be:

- Measure impact of the project and mainstreaming of torture prevention into the work of participating NHRIs.
- Encourage NHRIs to continue working on torture prevention.
- Strengthen the role of the network in promoting torture prevention.

Validation Meeting for the Guide on Monitoring CRPD by NHRIs

Concerned with access to justice, education, healthcare, social amenities and limited support to their complex and multiple needs, the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law convened a meeting to validate a guide on Monitoring Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in Africa.

The specific objectives of the technical meeting was to amongst others:

- Receive and process feedback from pretesting exercises undertaken by various NHRIs;
- Receive feedback on the Guide from experts with disabilities or other persons with disabilities;
- Focus on theme/article-specific amendments.

Participants in the validation meeting conveyed the message that people with disabilities -- be they blind, deaf, mentally or intellectually challenged -- should be on an equal footing with their non-disabled counterparts in all aspects of life, and actively involved in decisions affecting their lives, in keeping with the concept "nothing about us, without us".

The meeting specifically addressed articles 1- 29 of the Convention on the right of disabled persons to equal legal recognition, capacity and support before the law, and their right to equal access to justice as well as support and accommodation in the justice process.

The South African Human Rights Commission, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, Uganda Human Rights Commission, Malawi Human Rights Commission, National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria and several governmental and Civil Society Organizations including National Union of Disabled persons of Uganda, Tanzania Association of the Deaf, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, Kenya National Association of the Deaf and Ecumenical Disability Network participated in the two day meeting. The meeting saw participants validate the guide as part of implementation of the convention.



Participants at the validation meeting



News from our Members

Malawi Human Rights Commission

Public Inquiry into the Status of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

A public inquiry on the access to justice by victims of gender-based violence was conducted by the Commission. This inquiry was aimed at gathering information on the extent to which institutions like the judiciary and primary justice mechanisms including the stakeholders dealing with gender based violence handle issues. The inquiry also aimed at ensuring that the institutions involved are adhering to the principles of human rights in the provision of their services to victims of gender based violence. Lastly but not least, the goal of the activity was to ensure improved access to justice to victims whose rights have been violated.

The inquiry was chaired by the Mzuzu High Court Justice Dingiswayo Madise. The inquiry saw participation of 1500 men, women, boys and girls and 60 stakeholders from Government ministries, department, CBOs and the Private sector.

Welcoming New Commissioners

Seven new Commissioners were appointed to the Malawi Human Rights Commission. The newly appointed commissioners are Mr. Baldwin Chiyamwaka; Mr. Justin Kusamba Dzonzi; Mr. Benedicto Kondowe; Mr. Dalitso Kingsley Kubalasa, Mr. Steven Nkoka; Mrs. Bertha Sefu and Reverend Patrick Semphere. The appointed Commissioners will serve for a three-year term of office up to August, 2018, in line with section 5(1), of the Human Rights Commission Act, (Chapter 3:08 of the Laws of Malawi).

The National Human Rights Council of Morocco

Ensuring free, fair, transparent and credible elections

To help build public confidence in the honesty of electoral processes for the communal and regional elections held on September 4, 2015 in Morocco to renew the regional councils and communal councils of the Kingdom. The Special Commission for the Accreditation of Election Observers, chaired by Mr. Driss El Yazami, President of the national Human Rights Council (CNDH), accredited 58 national and international bodies and organizations.

This exercise saw 35 national NGOs, 6 international NGOs, 4 intergovernmental bodies, including the European Commission, 5 diplomatic missions, and the Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) were accredited. CNDH also deployed 474 observers to follow up on the progress of the campaigns and the voting process.

The CNDH has published a preliminary report which contains issues raised by observers. Some of the issues raised included the use of children in electoral campaigns, the difficulties of people with disabilities to access the polling centers due to a lack of accessibility.



Mr. Driss El Yazami, President of the National Human Rights Council (CNDH) addressing the press

Kenya National Commission on Human Rights

“The Error of Fighting Terror with Terror” Report.

The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights released a progress report on investigations into Human Rights Abuses in the ongoing crackdown against terrorism by Kenya security agencies. The report covers the period since the attack on Westgate shopping centre in Nairobi by Islamist militants.

In the report, the commission documented over one hundred and twenty (120) cases of egregious human rights violations that include twenty five (25) extrajudicial killings and eighty one (81) enforced disappearances. As detailed in the report, these violations are widespread, systematic and well-coordinated and include but are not limited to arbitrary arrests, extortion, illegal detention, torture, killings and disappearances.



KNCHR Vice- chairperson George Morara addressing the press

While noting the immense challenges that the government faces in combating terrorism and insecurity and supporting ongoing efforts by the state to combat terrorism; the commission maintains and insists that security policies and practices must be legal and consistent with human rights standards and principles.

“Combating terrorism through official terror is counterproductive and only serves to foment further resentment, increase radicalization and fertilizes the breeding grounds of future terrorists” the KNCHR said

As investigations continue, KNCHR called on the President to acknowledge and condemn the abuses by security agencies and call upon them to ensure respect for the rule of law and human rights in the fight against terrorism and to further issue an official public apology to the survivors and families of victims of the abuses.

Tanzania Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG)

Protecting Rights of Persons living with Albinism

Concerned with violence against persons with albinism (PWA), committed by individuals holding superstitious beliefs, that wealth and access to political offices can be achieved through the use of body portions of PWA, stakeholders have recommended strategies to end the atrocities.

The Tanzania Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG) organized a stakeholders meeting to lobby the government to allocate sufficient funds to public institutions dealing with the issue to enable them carry out public education programmes, speed up investigations and prosecution of cases of persons who are alleged to commit brutality and killing of PWA.



Truly the fight against violence and killing of persons with albinism requires concerted effort to succeed as the above placard, which reads: "Kila mtu anao wajibu wa kuwalinda watu wenye ualbino" (literally meaning everybody has a duty to protect persons with albinism) confirms.