

BUILDING CAPACITY Resources for human rights practitioners

are always limited. We are always trying to do more with less — with fewer people and less money and in less time than we feel we really need. But there is one important resource that is truly renewable: our skills. When we expand our own skills and those of our colleagues, and even take those skills out into the community to share them with new people, we can indeed do a little more with a little less in a little less time. The tactics in this section build capacity in two essential ways: they give human rights practitioners the skills they need to do their work better and faster, and they give people who are nominally outside of human rights work the skills they need to advance human rights.

Promoting Professionalism, Promoting Human Rights: Creating a professional organization that provides support and training to build professionalism among law enforcement personnel.

In Liberia, law enforcement officials saw the need to improve respect for human rights within their own ranks.

The Liberia National Law Enforcement Association (LINLEA) promotes professionalism among law enforcement personnel. LINLEA advances the perspective that law enforcement officers should be the leading human rights protectors and promoters, as prescribed by the law enforcement code of ethics and canons of police ethics. These codes challenge officers to respect the constitutional rights of all people to liberty, equality and justice. Unfortunately, due to lack of training, indiscipline, poor leadership or political manipulation, law enforcement personnel often engage in unprofessional conduct that leads to human rights abuses. LINLEA was established to meet police officers' needs for training, advocacy and assistance, and to do so in a context that makes them willing to join and participate.

To create LINLEA, respected law enforcement officers invited heads of public and private law enforcement departments and agencies to participate and establish an organizing committee. This committee developed the articles of incorporation and appointed a board of directors. The minister of justice attended the launch, adding legitimacy to the association. The association has since established a wide variety services for its members, including training in police and investigative procedures, human rights and leadership, as well as mechanisms to enhance enforcement of professional standards such as grievance procedures. In addition, the association reaches beyond the law enforcement network, working together with communities and organizations to improve the human rights conditions in Liberia.

Members make a personal investment in the organization by paying dues. LINLEA has now grown into a network of more than 500 law enforcement personnel, representing nearly 20 percent of the police force as well as many members of other law enforcement institutions. LINLEA's Center for Criminal Justice Research and Education has provided leadership and human rights training for 223 senior law enforcement officers. It has also conducted a training-of-trainers workshop for trainers and curriculum specialists of law enforcement agencies, as well as a workshop on policy formulation and development for law enforcement planners and administrators.

The association hosts annual social events which strengthen the bonds among members and their families and public forums to build relationships between law enforcement and communities. And it provides ongoing services that benefit law enforcement personnel, including certificates for participating in training workshops, which can help them receive promotions; support for their requests for advancement within the law enforcement structures; assistance with and some protection from professional problems such as dismissals and wrongful charges; and some assistance when facing personal problems such as financial distress due to a death in the family.

Many organizations have introduced training programs for law enforcement officials. LINLEA's approach, as a professional organization, requires an investment of time, money and effort from the police officers themselves. This adds an incentive for professional behavior — behavior that shows a respect for human rights — that comes from within rather than outside the profession. These incentives are critical to building the organizational strength needed to support law enforcement personnel who want to improve their own conduct, and to provide leverage for changing the behaviors of those who violate professional norms. Because they are law enforcement officials themselves, LINLEA's organizers have a particularly deep understanding of the challenges law enforcement personnel face and the kinds of support they need.

Making the Legal System Accessible in Rural Areas: Training local leaders as mediators and resources on human rights.

In many rural or provincial areas, access to the legal system and to conflict resolution services is extremely limited. A group in Uganda is working to change this by training local people in mediation skills.

In Uganda, the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) trains local leaders to help community members with legal complaints in a way that avoids the problems and frustrations of using the formal judicial system. FHRI teaches these leaders how to educate their communities about their constitutional and human rights. It also gives them paralegal skills, enabling them to provide mediation, counseling and advice so that citizens can obtain redress for abuses and exercise their full human rights.

Many people in rural Uganda are unaware of their full constitutional rights and of what can be done when those rights are violated. They also perceive the legal system to be inaccessible, as it is located in the city: its costs are high and it uses unfamiliar language and behavior.

FHRI chooses participants who have demonstrated leadership skills and are important figures in their communities, such as teachers, business leaders, community elders or medical workers. The training is a week-long curriculum addressing legal processes, discussion methods and ways to create communication networks. It also provides participants with the skills they need to monitor, document and report human rights abuses. Some volunteers become responsible for specific groups in the community, such as women, children, the elderly or others.

When they have completed their training, these paralegal volunteers form meeting centers that address problems in ways tailored to their communities. This encourages alternative solutions — such as counseling, mediation, referrals to existing organizations and advice with paperwork — so people can avoid the challenges and costs of the formal judicial system.

FHRI has now trained more than 1,000 volunteer paralegals and has published the *Paralegal Reference Handbook* (available from FHRI).

This tactic increases access to justice. And, when too often the call for human rights comes from outside a community, it also creates local advocates for these rights. (The Thongbai Thongpao Foundation in Thailand also brings legal education to rural areas, but it focuses more on educating community members who may require legal services than on training local leaders to provide those services. See page 145.) FHRI's approach could be used in other situations where legal recourse is not an option for people and where community leaders are willing and able to take on this role.

The success of this tactic relies on the assurance that the leaders identified from the outside have genuine moral authority in their communities and will use it along with their new mediation skills. Also, the short-term

training may need to be supplemented with long-term follow-up and support.

**Is this type of tactic needed in your community?
Who are the local leaders who might be trained to carry out such a tactic?**

Helping Human Rights Advocates be More Effective: Utilizing an information specialist and systems to help human rights advocates work more effectively.

Human rights practitioners can often benefit from institutional strengthening tactics that provide new skills, technology or organizational systems.

The Human Rights Centre at the University of Sarajevo focuses on improving access to information for human rights advocates. Staff members have built a strong information system and a central role for an information specialist. Use of this system and of the specialist's skills has allowed other staff to better and more productively focus on their core programmatic missions.

Establishing a library or documentation unit within human rights organizations can help staff facilitate the flow of information, manage confidential documents, chronicle the organization's history and improve day-to-day operations. Key elements of this tactic include the involvement of a skilled librarian or information specialist, an organized physical space, a core collection of materials and appropriate software and other information technology.

Human rights librarians have particular skills to offer a human rights organization, including knowledge of technology and of human rights information and documentation. The role of the librarian is to acquire and evaluate materials in relation to the organization's core mission, arrange them for efficient use and disseminate them within the organization. This last role involves working closely with staff to sort and prioritize information.

It is important to have sufficient space to organize materials and provide for staff interaction. At a minimum, a documentation center includes space for the librarian's office needs, including a networked computer and shelving and file units. The core collection of books and other resources depends on the mission and scale of the organization. In general, an organization should try to include information essential to its present and future programs.

Finally, an efficient documentation center will have appropriate software (for cataloguing, classification, indexing, and so on) and an Internet connection to allow the librarian to freely access information.

Read more about this in a tactical notebook available at www.newtactics.org, under Tools for Action.

The work of the librarians at the Human Rights Centre in Sarajevo focuses on the information needs of human rights advocates themselves, allowing them to be more effective by freeing up their time and energy. The Centre is a fairly large and well-funded organization, but nearly all human rights work now relies on timely access to complete and accurate information. When an organization has the necessary resources — even if that involves only to a part-time employee or dedicated volunteer — an information center could help provide that access. The librarians and information specialists themselves, however, may need to employ persuasion tactics to convince the organization and its members of the importance of work that may at first seem peripheral to the core mission.

I brought back the Human Rights Centre's tactic and I already knew that it would be useful. I have spent several hours with the administrative staff person on this. The library was in chaos and she spent three months doing it in the right way — setting up library. That was a big job and the person worked all summer. It's helping me a lot.

— Bea Bodrogi, NEKI, Hungary

Broadcasting Human Rights: Training victims of human rights abuses to use video technology to expose those abuses.

Human rights practitioners often need to get their message out to a broader public. In an age of advanced technology, this increasingly requires access to video and broadcast technology and the skills to use it.

Based in Hungary and Romania, the Black Box Foundation works to improve attitudes towards the Roma minority by training them in the production of television programs for local channels. The Foundation creates production teams, trains them in video production, secures airtime and sees that programs are exchanged between teams.

Since 1997, the Black Box Foundation has trained approximately 150 Roma at twelve locations within Hungary and Romania to inform local viewers about the issues affecting their communities. The Foundation solicits applications and creates ethnically-mixed teams of five people. Staff members first work to build trusting relationships with and among team members, discussing individual viewpoints and addressing the sensitive issues that will be brought up in the program. Teams then learn the fundamentals of television production and consult with experts on minority issues.

During the last three days of training, teams produce their first films. The Foundation provides cameras, lights, microphones and other necessary equipment. The teams go on to produce monthly programs at their local television stations, working independently and with their own resources, while the Foundation negotiates to secure regular airtime for the programs. The Foundation supervises and monitors teams for six months following training and teams exchange the videos they make with each other.

Outcomes among the production teams have varied. A number of teams continue to broadcast regularly on local television, while others now use their skills and equipment to record the activities of their organizations.

Due to the success of this approach, the Black Box Foundation has opened a successful one-year school for Roma students who are interested in becoming television professionals.

The Black Box Foundation program has helped to change the way minorities are viewed and treated in the region, reducing discrimination and prejudice. In Hungary and Romania the Roma are often segregated from the majority populations and their problems are hidden. They do not have access to the same educational and other resources used by the general population. The Black Box training program not only gives participants the skills they need to tell their own stories — as Roma — it also helps broadcast those stories on a medium members of the majority population are likely to see. This helps build a culture in which the minority and majority populations work together to promote human rights for all.

Documenting Torture: Creating a network of professionals to document torture and support victims.

A Kenyan group is linking doctors and lawyers in order to expose human rights violations committed by law enforcement agencies, and to raise awareness about the use of torture.

The Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU), a registered nongovernmental organization, is a network of doctors and lawyers who provide services to victims and their families. These services include independent postmortem examinations of suspicious deaths in the hands of law enforcement agencies, documentation of suspected cases of torture and medical and legal aid to prisoners and to torture survivors.

IMLU first organized its network by lobbying for the formation of professional committees, namely the Kenya Medical Association Standing Committee on Human Rights and a group of lawyers sympathetic to efforts to end torture. Once the committees were established, the IMLU developed ongoing workshops to strengthen the capacity of health workers and lawyers in dealing with torture. The workshops take place throughout the country, addressing topics such as defining human rights, building relationships with the Prison Department and educating professionals and government officials on human rights statutes and violations.

In order to reach victims of torture and their families, IMLU networks with various religious bodies, lawyers, doctors and NGOs throughout Kenya. Referred clients are able to request a postmortem on family members, the results of which are carefully documented according to medical and legal guidelines.

IMLU encourages clients to seek legal redress when evidence of torture is discovered. For clients who cannot afford legal aid, IMLU refers them to a network of lawyers and NGOs providing pro bono legal services. Its goal is to pursue public interest cases that will set a precedent against the use of torture and send a message to the perpetrators of torture.

Because of IMLU's continued efforts to expose torture in Kenya, several cases have been taken to court, resulting in increased concern for the well-being and treatment of prisoners. Moreover, prison authorities are now demonstrating an interest in better prison conditions by reducing the use of physical punishment or torture and, since the new government took power in late 2002, more government officials have begun working with IMLU to improve their own human rights efforts.

By coordinating a professional network and training members in documenting torture, IMLU has raised awareness about torture in Kenya, resulting in increased pressure on authorities to prevent it. The network also draws on the desire of some doctors and lawyers to use their skills to promote human rights, strengthening support around the country for an end to torture.

This work, however, has not been without challenges. The demand for IMLU's services often exceeds its financial capacity to support victims and victims in rural Kenya often confront a slow response from network lawyers, most of whom reside in Nairobi. IMLU has also experienced police interference and intimidation in its attempt to document postmortem examinations. In such cases, the network has joined with other NGOs to publicize these issues by releasing press statements that condemn interference and to bring legal action against the police.

The Eyes and Ears of Human Rights: Empowering NGOs to use video in human rights advocacy.

WITNESS empowers human rights organizations around the world to incorporate video as an advocacy tool in their work. Rooted in the power of personal testimonies and in the principle that a picture is worth a thousand words, the videos of WITNESS and its partners have been used

as evidence in legal proceedings;

to corroborate allegations of human rights violations;

to complement written reports to international and regional organizations that provide a counterweight to official versions of a country's human rights performance;

to stimulate grassroots education and mobilization;

to provide information for news broadcasts;

to promote human rights via the internet; and

to produce documentaries for broadcast on television worldwide.

Founded in 1992 and based in New York City, WITNESS has created partnerships with more than 150 groups in 50 countries on a variety of issues, ranging from the "social cleansing" of street children in Central America and sexual abuse of women and girls during Sierra Leone's civil war to sweatshops in the United States and the plight of displaced people in Burma.

WITNESS chooses partners who seek to build a long-term capacity to use video effectively and also seeks specific campaign opportunities where video can tip the balance between success and failure. Once a partnership is established, WITNESS provides the group with video equipment and training, then follows up with workshops in camera techniques, intensive instruction in using video for human rights work, systemic evaluation of video footage, post-production assistance and constructive feedback to create powerful documentaries.

WITNESS and its partners then create video advocacy campaigns around the footage collected. These campaigns include many components, including broadcast and distribution platforms, collaboration with other organizations and networks, targeted screenings before key audiences and opportunities for individual viewers to take action. They may be as targeted as using video to influence a small group of key decision-makers or as broad as trying to mobilize youth around a particular issue. Footage is also kept in the WITNESS Archive, where it is available to the global community as a unique resource of human rights information.

WITNESS recognizes that, depending on the local context, a human rights advocate may be protected or endangered by using a camera. WITNESS uses the experience of its staff and partners to help others create safe and appropriate policies for their situations. It also stresses the importance of trust between the person filming and the person being filmed and clearly explains the risks and benefits of speaking to a camera.

Visual Evidence can Stop Violations

WITNESS partners have collected testimonies and produced powerful videos that have been used in many ways. One strategic and savvy use of video advocacy is WITNESS's work with Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI) to document the deplorable conditions in a Paraguayan psychiatric hospital.

Julio and Jorge are two adolescent boys being kept in the hospital along with 458 other people — naked, in bare cells without access to bathrooms. The cells reeked of urine and excrement and the walls were smeared with feces. The boys spent approximately four hours every other day in an outdoor pen, littered with garbage and broken glass.

In December 2003, MDRI filed an emergency petition before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) at the Organization of American States (OAS), asking the IACHR to intervene on behalf of the boys, as well as the others in the hospital.

Along with a legal brief, MDRI submitted a video shot and edited with WITNESS and structured according to the articles set forth in several international human rights instruments to which Paraguay is bound. It was presented within this human rights framework to argue that the patients were legally entitled to protections of their rights to life and humane treatment. Using images that clearly demonstrated how Paraguay had failed to fulfill its obligations, the video put a human face on the issue.

This led the IACHR, for the first time, to approve urgent measures to protect the lives and physical integrity of those in psychiatric institutions, a precedent that can now be used in other countries in the region. MDRI and WITNESS subsequently brought the issue to the general public by streaming the video over their web sites and by collaborating with CNN en Español on a follow-up story. The president of Paraguay and the minister of health visited the hospital, after which the hospital director was fired and a commission was formed to investigate the issue.

By exposing the situation to a broader public, MDRI and WITNESS called attention to the appalling conditions of the state-run mental health facility and garnered further support for change. The press also played a pivotal role in the unfolding of events, helping to bring about significant changes.

Although Julio and Jorge's ward is still being renovated as this book goes to press, they are no longer locked in tiny cells and now have access to showers and clothes, as well as to 24-hour nurses. The Paraguayan Health Ministry is working with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) to promote community integration for people with mental disabilities.

The collaboration between WITNESS and MDRI has produced system-changing results, but the challenge lies ahead, in ensuring that human rights advocates pick up the momentum created by the video and follow up on the case to ensure that people with mental disabilities have the support and services necessary for their successful integration into the community.

While this case has relied upon strong visual evidence of a violation, it is important to note that WITNESS partners have successfully used video without relying upon such graphic images. Many, for instance, have created powerful videos by collecting testimonies and telling the stories of those most directly affected, which can have an equally powerful impact within a human rights campaign.

“ ”

Region	Initiating Sector	Target Sector	Focus	Human Rights Issue
Multiple	Civil Society	Government Business Civil Society Society	International	General human rights

Region	Initiating Sector	Target Sector	Focus	Human Rights Issue
Multiple	Civil Society	Government	National	Mental disability rights

Does the Government Keep its Promises? Creating a network of volunteer monitors to persuade local and national governments to abide by international human rights commitments.

In Slovakia, a group is monitoring government adherence to its international human rights commitments and using what it finds to persuade the government to keep those promises.

The League of Human Rights Advocates (LHRA) in Slovakia has developed a network of volunteer human rights monitors within the minority Roma population to ensure that international human rights treaties are implemented at the local level. As part of its work to become a member of the European Union, Slovakia ratified a number of treaties relating to human rights and was vulnerable to criticism of their human rights record. In addition, the constitution of the Slovak Republic gives priority, over domestic laws, to international human rights treaties ratified and passed into law by its parliament.

LHRA's monitoring approach helps to bridge the gap between the locus of abuse and the policies, laws and treaties created to prevent or stop a violation. Often the only discussion of these abuses and the laws or policies to prevent them occurs in high-level political and diplomatic forums. The LHRA recruits people from the disenfranchised population to serve as human rights monitors. The monitors learn, often for the first time, about their own rights under national and international law and then work with the LHRA to enforce those rights — which were signed into existence in far-off capitals — in their own town halls, police stations, schools and communities. The information from local monitors is used to present the true, on-the-ground impact of national and international laws in the country.

The Roma monitors are recruited through word of mouth. LHRA educates them about the relevant human rights instruments and the government authorities responsible for their implementation, then arranges introductory meetings with the police, mayors, community leaders and others, adding legitimacy and authority to the monitors' work. The network is divided into eight regions; regional coordinators work with LHRA headquarters to recruit and train monitors (roughly 48 in all).

When the monitors are prepared for their work, they are issued an LHRA identity card and provided with letters of introduction to present to local authorities. When an alleged abuse occurs, they go to the community to compile information from victims and from the involved authorities. The monitoring focuses on a number of issues, including employment, living conditions, education, health care, political participation, racially motivated violence and access to public facilities and services.

LHRA's national office synthesizes all the monitors' work into regular national reports and publishes its own periodical. As a result of this monitoring tactic, a range of human rights abuses occurring at the local level have been exposed and more victims of abuse have started to come forward with more complaints. The government, over time, has implemented policies to address discrimination in education, housing and employment.

Read more about this in a tactical notebook available at www.newtactics.org, under Tools for Action.

LHRA's tactic is a unique combination of pressure and promotion. The Roma monitors learn about their rights, empowering them to take action. And the government's desire to join the European Union has made it more sensitive to reports of abuse, thus providing an opportunity to heighten the impact of the monitors' work. The tactic is also a unique application of international law to people's day-to-day reality. It has increased power to affect human rights abuses in countries that have signed international human rights treaties and that have an interest in how their human rights record is perceived by the international community.

“ ” *Our tactics make the Slovak government uncomfortable, and sometimes we have experienced persecution by state agents. But our aim — ensuring respect for the fundamental rights of citizens — has gradually been met. And the state has turned out to be our friend and sometimes our partner in this.*

— Columbus Igboanusi, League of Human Rights Advocates, Slovakia

BUILDING HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURES	Region	Initiating Sector	Target Sector	Focus	Human Rights Issue
Building Capacity	Europe	Civil Society	Government Society	National	General human rights

Children as Advocates for their Own Rights: Empowering children with information, skills and support to advocate for their own rights.

When equipped with skills and with access to appropriate information, children can defend and advocate for their own rights.

In India, the group Concerned for Working Children (CWC) enables children to create formal structures such as unions and governance bodies to advocate for their own rights. Through this work, CWC strengthens the participation of children, especially those who are working or otherwise marginalized, in decision-making and governance on all matters that concern them. CWC has been actively involved in this cause since 1980 and is currently working in five Karnataka districts.

CWC's efforts to empower working children led initially to the formation of Bhima Sangha — a union of, by and for working children. Bhima Sangha has a membership of 13,000 children in Karnataka and is an important partner in CWC's work to enable children to play a proactive role in decision-making and governance. Since its inception in 1990, Bhima Sangha has been a powerful advocate for the rights of working children and is equally concerned about improving the quality of life of their parents and communities. At the national and regional level, Bhima Sangha is assisting other working children with the formation of their own unions; it was also instrumental in forming the National and International Movements of Working Children.

So that they could influence the programs and policies that affect them, the children also demanded a formal role in governance. This led to the creation of what was later called the Makkala Panchayat, or Children's Government, elected by children in the community. The children designed its structure and determined its purpose and leadership style. Because the children wanted it to have a formal status with the local government, or Panchayat, CWC devised a mechanism to formally integrate the Makkala Panchayat with the village government through a task force, which is chaired by the district minister. The task force is comprised of both adults and children. Elections to the Makkala Panchayat are held by the formal government administration and the secretary of the adult Panchayat acts as the secretary of the children's Panchayat.

CWC teaches the children skills such as research, documentation, communication, negotiation and advocacy. The children use theater, puppetry, songs, publications, wall magazines and audio and video tools to support their stands and principles. They spell out their priorities, substantiate their claims and advocate for change. To maintain good relations with the local government, the children avoid political or other affiliations, but are actively involved in political debates.

Through their organized participation in political structures and local governance the children become more self-aware and they make the state accountable. Their participation in political space also enables other marginalized groups such as women and ethnic groups to change their immediate situation and strengthen democracy.

Thousands of children now participate in the governance of their villages and adults who were traditionally feudal and patriarchal have become advocates for children's rights. They see a value in the active and equal participation of children, as they have seen it translated into overall benefits for the whole community¹.

The children's organizations have been powerful in addressing a wide range of issues at the local level, including water and fuel problems, housing, pensions for the elderly and disabled, exploitative child labor, substance abuse and child marriage. They have also contributed substantially to the policies on children at the state, national and international levels.

The foundation of CWC's work is the empowerment of working children so that they may be their own first line of defense and participate in an informed manner in all decisions concerning themselves. CWC has shown that the troubling living conditions and challenges facing children can be mitigated through education, empowerment and partnerships with adults. CWC works in concert with local governments, communities and working children themselves to implement viable, comprehensive, sustainable and appropriate solutions. The outcome is an enhanced quality of life for all community members, made possible by the input of children themselves.

¹ Journey in Children's Participation, Nandana Reddy and Kavita Ratna, The Concerned for Working Children, India, 2002

Region	Initiating Sector	Target Sector	Focus	Human Rights Issue	BUILDING HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURES	New Tactics in Human Rights
Asia	Civil Society	Government Business Society	Local	Children's rights	Building Capacity	