EHAHRDP EXTERNAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This is a Summary of the full, 30 page, Evaluation report from the team of independent evaluators of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) since its formation and establishment in 2005/6. The evaluation provide a review with evidence-based recommendations of the outcomes and impact that EHAHRDP has both contributed to and, where possible, can reasonably claim attribution.[1]

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide EHAHRDP with: *"an evaluation to seek to identify lessons learnt form EHAHRDP's experience in the past five years, as well as opportunities for the organisation going forward".[2]*

The full evaluation report contains evidence-based findings and practical recommendations that should enable staff, the Board and partners to reflect on the extent of achieving the objectives for the protection of HRDs in the sub-region; what has worked well and why, and what has worked less well and why. It is hoped this will contribute learning to current debates within the organisation about how to take forward protection, capacity building and advocacy as part of EHAHRDP's future strategic response. Indeed, the evaluators remain particularly keen to emphasise the "tool for learning" aspect of this evaluation. The full and final evaluation aims to build on ongoing discussions within EHAHRDP and the network around the building of strategic and operational capacity for future protection and advocacy work that the organisation undertakes.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The methodology and assessment for this evaluation was conducted between March and May 2011 and was comprised of four interrelated and interdependent key strands:

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[1]   To obtain the full report, please contact the EHAHRDP secretariat via email on program@defenddefenders.org .

[2]   External Evaluation Terms of Reference.

- conducting a desk review of existing documentation that describes the background, history and context of the work, the purpose and intended outcomes and impacts of the elements under review.
- semi-structured interviews with, and input from a significant number of EHAHRDP staff, Network Members and technical and collaborating partners, including fieldwork conducted during, and around, the General Assembly in Uganda at the end of March;
- semi-structured interviews with, and input from, a number of key external targets; officials and policy-makers, donors and wider stakeholders;
- an online e-survey of EHAHRDP staff and representatives of EHAHRDDP's member organisations gathering evaluation data and perspectives on the effectiveness of EHAHRDP's protection, capacity building and advocacy strategies and activities

(A full list of the stakeholders that were interviewed is included in Appendix II of the full report).

EVALUATION NARRATIVE

EHAHRDP's three strategic objectives – to protect and defend HRDs; to build the capacity of HRDs; and to advocate for and raise public awareness of HRDs – are arguably all ultimately about protection: training in risk management, protection through profile-raising or advocacy to preserve space for HRDs' work[3] are all about safeguarding HRDs and enabling them to do their work.

In theory and in practice, the three main strands of work are closely intertwined and the tight relationship between them is cited as: *"a key strength"* by one funder. Another external commentator considers that it is in the combination of its three objectives that EHAHRDP's added value and niche lies. This spread of work allows it to draw upon – and link up with – the interventions of other NGOs more focused on, for example, research and documentation or capacity-building. As such, there is a strong sense of complementarity in the work of EHAHRDP and international NGOs. External relationships and internal synergies are said by many to be: "*very positiv*e".

We found that EHAHRDP's training programmes draws on the specific expertise of other groups, including for example, Frontline in digital security. Its practical, activist approach fits well with Amnesty International's in-depth research and legal analysis. EHAHRDP can use other NGOs' material, while in turn calling on them to act when it senses that HRDs are at risk. It plays a key role in helping international NGOs assess and verify claims that HRDs are in trouble and shaping their responses accordingly.

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3 EHAHRDP's own protection policy notes how advocacy "*brings to the fore the situation facing HRDs and ensures concerted efforts at national, regional and international level to make policies and laws as well as create a climate where human rights activists can carry out their work in safety*"; *Policy for support to Human Rights Defenders under the protection program*, page 4.

Many observers note that EHAHRDP seems aware of its own limitations and does not try to replace others; for example, it admitted itself to be lacking in: "*serious / expert legal opinion of the possible detrimental effects of* [an Ethiopian] *bill on CSOs*"[4], but responded by simply flagging some key issues and leaving the deeper analysis to, for example, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. At the same time, EHAHRDP can take advantage of the tendency for international NGOs, under pressure from funders, to hand over roles and responsibilities to local NGOs.

Overall then, in EHAHRDP's objectives and strategies, there seems to be, as one external respondent put it, "*no issue of duplication with international NGOs, some of which do not have many resources for HRDs' support anyway... there are not many groups compared to need*".

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS
The development of EHAHRDP over the last five years has been rapid, effective and impressive. The emphasis on putting in place a strong Secretariat and keeping governance light has been vindicated by network growth and organisational effectiveness.

EHAHRDP's triple focus on protection, capacity-building and advocacy brings great coherence to its programmes, though there is more that can be done to maximise the synergies across the three strands of work, for example in terms of the protection programme informing evidence-based advocacy.

EHAHRDP's interventions complement those of international NGOs, many of which have come to depend on EHAHRDP as a source of expertise and a conduit for information. Members and partners are content that EHAHRDP's overall objectives are being met, with greatest progress felt to be being made in terms of capacity-building, especially relating to the imparting of knowledge of international human rights instruments and mechanisms. There are some relative expressions of concern at the quality of EHAHRDP's analysis of the problems facing HRDs and of the strategic choices it makes. To respond to these concerns, EHAHRDP should better elaborate its objectives and strategies, especially in regard of capacity-building and advocacy.

The establishment of national coalitions and the consequent development of national strategies can provide a framework by which EHAHRDP can identify and lay out the role it can best play to build capacity in each country. It may be that EHAHRDP has a particular role to help in the development of 'networking skills' among members and coordinators of the emerging national coalitions, for example. It can also look to further refine its interventions to build the capacity of HRDs to manage crises themselves, which would be a product of more tailored, national-specific support. It should be noted though that these suggestions amount to

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4   Annual Report: July 2008 – June 2009, page 12.

refinements to, not radical change of, what is a strong and resilient capacity-building programme.

EHAHRDP's range of direct protection initiatives – security training, temporary and longer-term evacuation and support – are much appreciated by those who have benefited from them. But EHAHRDP should look to further tailor the support accorded HRDs in exile and to involve network members in this. There is a perpetual challenge too to ensure that early warning systems and decision-making processes are effective and that EHAHRDP is able to respond in a timely and efficient manner to calls for protection assistance.

In its advocacy work, EHAHRDP has contributed to positive results at the international level, reflected in the importance accorded Somalia by the UN and in its influence on the Ethiopian LIS for the EU Guidelines on HRDs, for example. It can be difficult for these developments to have significant positive effect on the ground, however. The sense of a relative lack of achievement in advocacy reflects the difficult context in which EHAHRDP operates more than any substantial shortcomings in what EHAHRDP has attempted. That said, EHAHRDP could usefully lay out an overarching advocacy strategy detailing and justifying the balance to be struck between national, regional and international advocacy. Part of this should also be to develop better monitoring and learning systems for capturing and sharing anecdotal feedback about the extent of progress being won by advocacy initiatives.

EHAHRDP has shown significant leadership in visibly and forcefully defending the rights of LGBTI HRDs. The legitimacy of this work is unquestionable, though it is somewhat donor-driven and there is at least a risk that it extends beyond defending LGBTI HRDs to defending people for being LGBTI. The logic for EHAHRDP having taken on coordination of an Amnesty International HRE project in Uganda does not seem especially strong. The impacts of this project on EHAHRDP's core programmes do not seem too significant, however.

In its future development, EHAHRDP should now move from a *growth* phase to a *consolidation* phase. The emphasis should shift from building the Secretariat to strengthening the network, making it come alive and adding horizontal linkages to the strong vertical relationships already in place. Members need to come to identify with the network more.

The nature and frequency of actions taken by network members to defend – through media work, advocacy and direct support – their colleagues who come under threat elsewhere would be an important sign of the strength of the network. In terms of governance too, network members should become more active players in setting the direction of EHAHRDP's strategies and in overseeing their delivery. The foundations now in place should give confidence that EHAHRDP can avoid the governance issues which have dogged other regional networks.

An important element to consolidating EHAHRDP should also be greater attention to the internal management of the Secretariat. EHAHRDP can tend to operate in a fairly reactive, ad hoc manner, without systematic means of prioritising either countries or categories of HRD. It would benefit from seeking **to do less, better.** One effect of an investment in organisational processes and management would be to take the strain off, and reduce dependence on its leadership and in particular, Hassan Shire.

Key Recommendations
In conclusion, the following evidence-based recommendations are proposed for consideration by EHAHRDP staff, members of the Board and, where appropriate, members of the Advisory Council. See also page 6 of this Summary, which outlines an implementation plan and the recommendations have been notionally prioritised and proposals for practical implementation set out.

1. To develop strategies to elaborate more clearly EHAHRDP's priorities in terms of capacity-building and advocacy. These strategies should be developed through close interaction with members and partners so as to ensure due complementarity with national coalition strategies;
2. To elaborate clearer indicators of success and create space for reflection and learning – involving members and partners – to allow for refinement of strategies and tactics;
3. To strive to involve members more in collective advocacy and in the provision of assistance to their peers who are forced to flee their own countries. To this end, EHAHRDP could look to :
    a. include within national strategies the supportive roles which network members in other countries can play;
    b. foster sub-regional networks of organisations willing and able to act on each other's behalf in times of heightened threat;
4. To seek to shift the emphasis in organisational development from growth to consolidation and from building the Secretariat to strengthening the network.
5. A consequence of this may be a need to institute a Governance Review to test whether governance structures continue to be appropriate as the organisation and network evolve;
6. To commit more resources to internal management of the Secretariat, including by giving more time to supporting and appraising staff in their work.
7. Aspire to fostering the skills and experience of a Deputy Director could represent the most strategic approach to filling management gaps and would also be forming part of a wider 'successor strategy' for Hassan Shire.
8. To establish a Resource Mobilisation Strategy with the aims of minimising vulnerabilities stemming from a lack of reserves and of reducing the risk of being driven away from the core mandate by particular donors' priorities.

Recommendations within a Proposed Implementation Plan

Recommendation	Implementation plan	Priority level[5]
To develop strategies to elaborate more clearly EHAHRDP's priorities in terms of i) capacity-building and ii) advocacy. These strategies should be developed through close interaction with members and partners so as to ensure due complementarity with national coalition strategies.	Advocacy strategy: Secretariat to identify advocacy opportunities at national, regional and international level and provisionally assign roles to Secretariat, members and allied NGOs; negotiate roles with members and allies and finalise the strategy, objectives and indicators on this basis; Capacity-building strategy: plot capacity needs across the network; assign responsibility to the Secretariat or the Protection Desks, or mark those needs which are best met by levering in other capacity-building providers.	M
To elaborate clearer indicators of success and create space for reflection and learning – involving members and partners – to allow for refinement of strategies and tactics.	Develop a series of standard questions – e.g. 'what has worked best?', 'what have worked least well?', 'what are the key opportunities and threats of the following period?' – for putting to Advisory Council members on a quarterly basis. These questions should reference the specific indicators established for national and regional strategies.	H
To strive to involve members more in collective advocacy and in the provision of assistance to their peers who are forced to flee their own countries.	Ensure that national strategies detail the supportive roles which network members in other countries can play in terms of both advocacy and assistance to protection efforts; Foster sub-regional networks of organisations willing and able to act on each other's behalf in times of heightened threat;	M
To seek to shift the emphasis in organisational development from growth to consolidation and from building the Secretariat to strengthening the network.	Develop a strategy for network development which lays out measures to strengthen existing national coalitions and priorities for the development of new national coalitions; Institute a Governance Review to test whether governance structures continue to be appropriate as the organisation and network evolve;	M
To commit more resources to internal management of the Secretariat, including by giving more time to supporting and appraising staff in their work.	Identify a Deputy Director and plot a strategy for training and mentoring to build up the management capacity of this individual; Regularise 1-2-1 meetings with individual staff to review performance and identify support needs. Responsibility for these reviews should be split between the Director and the new Deputy Director.	H
To establish a Resource Mobilisation Strategy with the aims of minimising vulnerabilities stemming from a lack of reserves and of reducing the risk of being driven away from the core mandate by particular donors' priorities.	A Resource Mobilisation Strategy should have a time-frame of 3-5 years and should include: targets for income and reserves; balance of project and core income; donor targets; criteria by which funding can be accepted	H

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[5] where 'HIGH' = within 12 months and 'MEDIUM' = within 18 months