



EAST AND  
HORN OF  
AFRICA  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENDERS  
PROJECT  
(EHAHRDP)

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 2 JULY-DECEMBER 2011

# Defenders in Focus

The Bi-Annual e-Newsletter for members and partners of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network

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## PROGRAM UPDATES



Five day workshop for human rights defenders celebrating Human Rights Day © EHAHRDP

### CAPACITY BUILDING

*Equipping Human Rights Defenders with Tactical Tools; EHAHRDP Celebrates Human Rights Day*

With the support of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, EHAHRDP marked the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by holding a five-day forum for Ugandan human rights defenders from the 5-9<sup>th</sup> December. 'Claiming Spaces: Tactical Tools for Human Rights Defend-

ers' brought together over 50 human rights defenders from different parts of Uganda. It aimed at providing an opportunity for them to build their capacity, use and interact with the regional and international human rights mechanisms, create networks and share experiences and information on good practices. The theme of this forum also reflected the international theme for Human Rights Day 2011 – that is 'social media and human rights.'

The forum opened with a day of high panel discussions leading into four days of training in which participants benefitted from one-day training modules in international and regional human rights mechanisms, digital security, social media for human rights, stress reduction for HRDs, resource mobilization, monitoring, documenting, and reporting, and security management training.

During the opening day's debate, participants engaged the invited speakers Margaret Sekaggya, UN

Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders; Med Kagwa, chairperson of the Uganda Human Rights Commission; Roselyn Karugonjo Seggawa, director of monitoring and investigations at the UHRC; Stefan Messerer, deputy German ambassador; Livingstone Sewanyana, chairperson of the EHAHRDP board; Hassan Shire, executive director of EHAHRDP; and Joseph Bikanda, coordinator of the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network in a lively debate about the human rights situation in Uganda. They also highlighted the many challenges facing human rights defenders both in terms of restrictive laws and policies and limits to their own capacities.

The training revealed fertile grounds for employing social media for human rights defenders as well as areas requiring further investigation and deployment including SMS communications and secure protocols for social media. At a time when the space for human rights defenders to work in Uganda is threatened and with HRDs facing many challenges, this forum proved to be timely and insightful to the participants.



Group photo of the participants who attended 'Claiming Spaces: Tactical Tools for Human Rights Defenders' © EHAHRDP

## PROGRAM UPDATES

*Taking Stock after 5 years of existence; EHAHRDP evaluated*

Between March and May 2011, a team of independent evaluators reviewed the work of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) since its formation and establishment in 2005. The main objective of this evaluation was to capture the impact and lessons learnt from EHAHRDP's work to date.

The evaluation [report](#) which was officially launched on 25<sup>th</sup> November provides an assessment of the outcomes and impact that EHAHRDP has both contributed to and, where possible, can reasonably claim attribution, as well as offering evidence-based recommendations.

Some of the recommendations from the evaluation are already being implemented and EHAHRDP looks forward to working with its member and partners towards achieving their full implementation.

### ADVOCACY

*Celebrating 30 years of the African Charter; Advocacy at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights*

The 50<sup>th</sup> session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights which took place from 24<sup>th</sup> October-7<sup>th</sup> November marked the celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the African Charter. All activities carried out at both the 50<sup>th</sup> session and the NGO Forum preceding the Commission session were geared towards the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

EHAHRDP's delegation comprised



Chris Stalker presenting the outcomes of the evaluation report during its launch © EHAHRDP

of activists from Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan. An overview of the human rights situation in the region was presented during the forum and the delegation participated in a number of panel discussions on topics including "30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights: Celebration or Reflection"; "Freedom of Association-Progress, Opportunities and Challenges over the last 30 years"; "Communications Procedure before the African Commission on Human and Peoples'

man rights defenders focused on Burundi, Ethiopia and Sudan. As a steering committee member, EHAHRDP took part in the drafting committee that corrected and presented all the tabled resolutions to the NGO Forum.

EHAHRDP along with the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) organised a side event on 26<sup>th</sup> October highlighting the human rights situation in Burundi, at which the report of EHAHRDP's trial observation mission in the case of the murder of anti-corruption campaigner Ernest Manirumva was launched. This followed the side event EHAHRDP and PDU held at the Commission in May to screen Protection International's documentary on the campaign for justice for Manirumva. EHAHRDP is committed to maintaining international and regional attention on the case.



Panel Discussion; Solange Habonimana, Hassan Shire and Cyriague Ndayisenga during the Burundi side event at the 50<sup>th</sup> session of the ACHPR, Banjul © EHAHRDP

## PROGRAM UPDATES

### *Advocacy at the Human Rights Council*

**E**HHRDP has consistently used its presence at the Human Rights Council to engage with UN mechanisms, raising awareness of the challenges facing human rights defenders in the sub-region and advocating for measures to improve their working environment.

At the 18<sup>th</sup> session which took place from 12<sup>th</sup>-30 September,



Eritrea side event at the UN Human Rights Council, 20 September L-R: Ben Rawlence, Human Rights Watch; Matthew Jones, Christian Solidarity Worldwide; Hassan Shire, EHAHRDP; and Elsa Chyrum, Human Rights Concern-Eritrea/EHAHRD-Net focal point ©EHAHRDP

EHAHRDP together with its focal person from Human Rights Concern-Eritrea carried out advocacy activities to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crackdown on government critics and independent media in Eritrea, including organising a panel discussion on 20<sup>th</sup> September.

At the same session, EHAHRDP supported a delegation from Legal Human Rights Centre, Tanzania and the coordinator of the coalition against the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda were also present at the session ahead of their countries Universal Periodic Review. Network mem-

bers were also present to follow up on the UPR of Somalia, which had taken place in May.

### PROTECTION

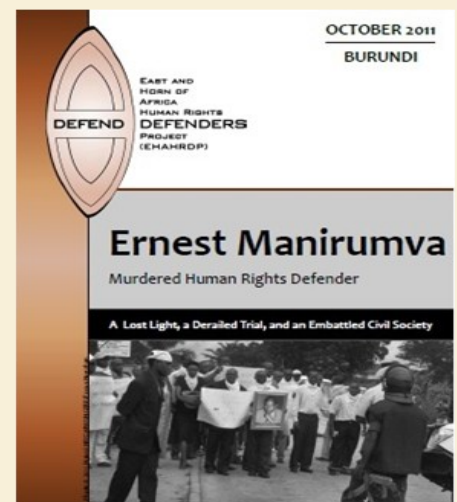
**T**he protection program has continued to respond to the emergency needs of human rights defenders at risk especially journalists who are increasingly working under restrictive conditions. The period from July to December saw the program extending both financial and technical support to over 30 defenders. This included evacuations from the area of risk to a safer environment where the defender can continue with his/her human rights work, and medical assistance, with psychosocial support being an integral part since some defenders have gone through violations both physically and psychologically at the hands of their aggressors.

In addition, the program has continued to work towards enhancing the skills of defenders through in collaboration with Protection Desk Uganda/Kenya offering security management trainings and internship placements. The program continues to work closely with both local and international partners to ensure a streamlined and consistent approach in addressing the ever increasing needs of defenders and the shrinking space with in which they work.

### *Burundi: Ernest Manirumva Trial Observation*

**C**ontinuing on from previous collaboration with Burundi's Justice for Ernest Manirumva campaign, EHAHRDP engaged actively on the case of the murdered human rights defender in 2011. Manirumva, Vice-President of Burundi's Anti-Corruption and Economic Malpractice Observatory (OLUCOME), was assassinated in April 2009 in the midst of investigations into illegal arms shipments. The judicial process surrounding Manirumva's death has been marred by many delays, a failure to investigate key leads, and a lack of fair trial standards for those charged in the case.

The report of an EHAHRDP trial observation mission in June 2011, which includes a summary of the case so far and of the harassment of civil society actors involved in the justice campaign, was published in October 2011 in [English](#) and in [French](#). Both reports are available on the website, in addition to a number of press releases related to the case.



The cover page of the Ernest Manirumva report

## PARTNER PROJECTS

## AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION PROJECT

*Promoting Human Rights Education in Schools*

The African Human Rights Education Project through its Micro Project participants was able to achieve a lot in the second half of 2011. During a monitoring visit led by the implementing partners East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) and the Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD) to one of the project participants, Human Rights Concern, took the monitoring team to one of the schools where the micro project is being implemented. A number of peace clubs have been formed at the school under the AHRE to promote awareness on human rights among the students and teachers. A student member of one of the peace clubs developed a 'catch word' for the club. The acronym for the 'catch word' is **FRIENDSHIP** meaning:

**F**riendship  
**R**espect  
**I**nvest in each other  
**E**ncourage one another  
**N**ature one another  
**D**epend on each other  
**S**hare with each other  
**H**elp one another  
**I**ntegrate with each other  
**P**ray for one another

This acronym became a model and tool for the students during peer to peer learning sessions. The other students said they associated themselves with this since it covered every aspect of their student lives and what they wished to see happen in the student community. This 'catch word' has increased the respect of human rights and reduced the abuse of rights within their community.

## PROTECTION DESK UGANDA/KENYA

During the last half of the year 2011, Protection Desk Uganda (PD-U) has consolidated its working relationship with various organisations in Uganda among those was further strengthening the exchange with partner organisations of the American Jewish World Service, joint trainings with the Human Rights Centre Uganda (HRC) across the country and training for partner organisations of the Human Rights Network (HURINET).

Constantly working to improve the support given to defenders in the area of security and protection management, PD-U has provided tailor-made capacity building to anti-corruption activists across Uganda, members of CBOs and NGOs working on natural resources issues especially in the Albertine oil region in Western Uganda, staff of the South Sudan Human Rights Commission, LGBTI and sex worker refugee groups living in Uganda and Sudanese human rights defenders living and working in Uganda. The above mentioned engagements have enabled PDU to get a deeper understanding of specific working environments of the above groups of defenders and learning how they have devised *ad hoc* security management strategies to keep safe as they do their work in sometimes harsh environments.

PD-U has also been able to expand its team with a newly recruited franco-phone Protection Desk Officer based in Kampala to strengthen the Desk's ability to provide support to defenders in franco-phone countries of the EHA region.

Protection Desk Kenya (PD-K) on the other hand has been working closely with human rights defenders (HRDs) working with victims of the 2007/8 election violence in Kenya. One of the most pressing concerns in the country is the impact of the impending International Criminal Court (ICC) ruling

following the pre trial hearings of six prominent individuals charged with bearing the greatest criminal responsibility for the violence. The situation of HRDs, particularly those who are intermediaries of the ICC remains uncertain due to fear of reprisals depending on the outcome of the ICC ruling. The HRDs engaged with the ICC process have been labelled as 'traitors' by politicians and some community members due to their association with possible witnesses of the ICC and perceived contribution to the prosecution case. These HRDs have subsequently faced heightened risk with reported cases of threats and intimidation. In this light, PD-K has engaged the HRDs involved in the ICC process, particularly those based in volatile regions in the country, through capacity building on risk assessment and security management. An extensive training has equipped HRDs with tools to analyse their working environment, assess risks emanating from their work as well as develop response strategies to mitigate the risks.

PD-K in collaboration with the EHAHRDP has also been working closely with stakeholders in protection, including EU missions in the country which have a mandate under the EU Guidelines for Protection of HRDs, with an aim to enhance the protection of HRDs in the country. A primary focus of this engagement in the recent past has been the immediate need to put in place adequate response mechanisms for the protection of HRDs who may face risk following the ICC ruling on confirmation of charges.

For the year 2012, both PD-U and PD-K will focus its efforts on a further improvement of its capacity building approach and tailor made support to priority target groups of defenders coupled with further exploring the synergies with the important work carried out by EHAHRDP in the protection of human rights defenders in the East and Horn of Africa region.



## WHAT'S NEW

*New staff on board*

In September, EHAHRDP welcomed on board **Joseph Bikanda** as the new Pan-African Human Rights Defenders-Network (PAHRD-NET) coordinator. Joseph brings with him significant prior experience as legal advisor at the Secretariat of ACHPR and Technical Assistant to the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa.

The PAHRD-Net has the end objective of supporting the substantial efforts of the five sub-regional networks in the protection of HRDs and especially to cast light on the needs of vulnerable defenders including journalists, HRDs working in a repressive regime or in conflict areas, LGBTI defenders and women human rights defenders,

**Rosette Arinaitwe** also joined the team as the new coordinator

of the African Human Rights Education Project (AHRE). Rosette is a lawyer by profession and she comes to the project with a wealth of experience and a strong human rights background spanning over 7 years. She holds a Masters degree in Human Rights, Justice and Globalization, a Bachelor of Laws degree and a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice.

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council: 27<sup>th</sup> February-23<sup>rd</sup> March 2012
- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: 18<sup>th</sup> April-2<sup>nd</sup> May 2012
- Strategic advocacy training for HRDs in East Africa in February 2012
- South Sudan capacity and coalition building in April
- EHAHRD-Net focal point meeting in July
- Financial management and organisation training for HRDs in Tanzania (April), Burundi (May), Somaliland (September) and Rwanda (June)
- Advocacy training for the Rwandan coalition on UPR in February

**Members Survey**

As the network secretariat, EHAHRDP is committed to understanding our members' current needs and priorities. Please help us do this better by completing the brief survey we have circulated to all member organisations and returning it by 24th February 2012.

We are always interested to know what you are doing, so please continue to send updates and add us to your mailing lists!

## CONTACTS

Human Rights House, Plot 1853, Lulume Rd., Nsambya, P.O. Box 70356, Kampala, Uganda

- Phone: + 256-41- 265820(General Line )
- 256-312-265822/3/4 Programs/ Administration
- Fax: + 256-312-265825
- Website: <http://www.defenddefenders.org>
- Facebook.com/humanrightsdefendersproject
- Twitter-@EHAHRDP

**Contact persons**

Hassan Shire Sheikh - Executive Director:  
[executive@defenddefenders.org](mailto:executive@defenddefenders.org), [hshire@yorku.ca](mailto:hshire@yorku.ca)

Nuruh Nakiwala - Program Officer:  
[program@defenddefenders.org](mailto:program@defenddefenders.org)