



HURIDOCCS

*Harnessing
the power of
human rights
information*

2017

Annual Report

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Letter from Executive Director Friedhelm Weinberg



Friedhelm Weinberg, Executive Director HURIDOCS

2017 was a year in which one could be forgiven for forgetting how much the human rights movement has achieved in recent decades. In a strange irony, the best indicators of those achievements may have been the efforts made around the world to curb the space of civic actors, in order to stop them from doing their work. If human rights lawyers and activists were not getting results, then they might not have been threatened so often and so broadly.

2017 was also a year in which technologies became an ever-present part of our daily lives, in ways that we could have not imagined just a few years earlier, and which many were uncertain that they wanted. While addictively convenient, these technologies also demonstrated a capacity both to unite and to fragment, to disrupt authority and to empower its ability to crack down on dissent.

For HURIDOCS, this time has opened up tremendous opportunities to bridge the human rights and technology development “spaces,” in ways that give defenders far more powerful tactics and tools, including through innovations like machine learning. It is exciting to see the potential impacts, which include freeing up more time for over-stretched defenders, making more information available to non-experts, and harnessing unprecedented amounts of data as potential evidence.



Yet this is also a moment for us to think critically, about meaningful opportunities versus tech “hype,” about the ethical implications of new capabilities, and about where potential for harm might exist. We must remain positive in our outlook, inclusive in our deliberations, and invested in our mission if we aim to strengthen the global human rights movement at this critical juncture.

Our mission goals include that:

- HURIDOCS is deeply embedded in the human rights movement and instrumental in its progress toward realising rights for all.
- We “move the movement” by embracing new opportunities to leverage information and technologies to achieve human rights impact. The field adopts these innovations.
- Our tools and services are built to last and weather storms. They do not become obsolete when threats against defenders surge, and they adapt successfully to support new tactics.
- We learn from individual projects, create scalable solutions and document knowledge that helps defenders gather, analyse and use information to promote and protect human rights.

As you read about our work, I hope that you will find that these goals inform it. As we look to 2018, we know that defenders will need an ally who understands the intersection of human rights advocacy, technology, and organisational effectiveness. HURIDOCS pledges to be that ally.



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About Us

HURIDOCS is a non-profit organisation that has worked at the intersection of technology and human rights for over 35 years. We are a globally distributed team of information scientists, documentation experts, information security specialists and software designers out to empower defenders to act strategically on human rights information.

As political openness shrinks and technology evolves at warp speed, our mission is to help the human rights movement harness the power of the data revolution to expose and prevent abuses, protect survivors, and advocate and litigate to end systematic violations.

HURIDOCS strengthens human rights groups in three ways, each offering an opportunity to turn information into action.

“Our entire understanding of how to tell our stories and the language we use to communicate our findings have transformed as a result of our work with HURIDOCS. We are engaging larger audiences and our message is resonating in far off places we had never imagined we would reach.”

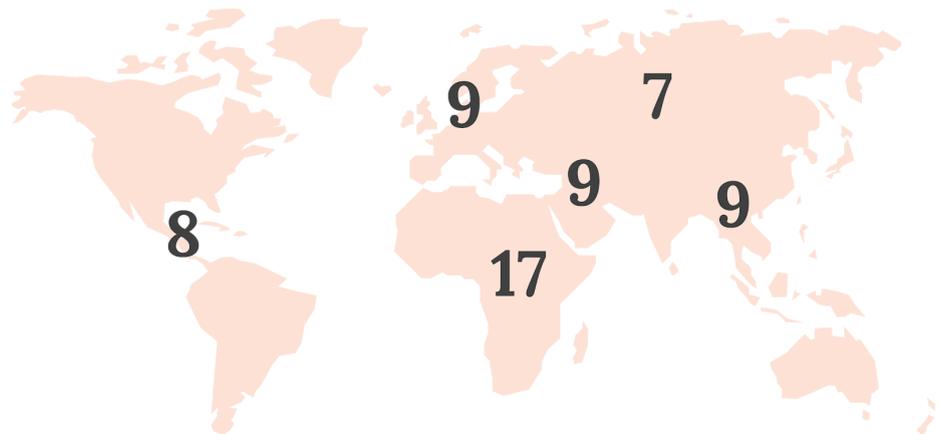
Tsering Tsomo, Executive Director, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy

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HURIDOCS Advise

HURIDOCS Advise partners with human rights defenders to design and implement technology-based information management strategies and practices that target their unique needs. We provide capacity building and technical assistance, research and documentation support, and security and resilience coaching.

In 2017, HURIDOCS worked with 59 human rights organisations that are tackling issues from unlawful detention to forced disappearances, access to information, the right to a fair trial, torture, LGBTI rights, women's rights, and more.



Distribution of 2017 HURIDOCS Advise Projects by Region

Representative Projects

Reducing Vulnerabilities - Much of our work providing tech support to help human rights groups secure information took place with partners based in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) region. A key focus of our work in the region has been to introduce the idea of organisational, versus individual, digital security: HURIDOCS has concentrated on teams and workflows, helping NGO team members learn how they can better protect one another and their work. This approach has proven successful, increasing organisations' preparedness to identify and, when possible, prevent threats and to respond to information security emergencies as they arise.

“Widely divergent digital security practices between our staff, and between our Strasbourg and Moscow offices, have long been one of our chief struggles. Thanks to HURIDOCS’ consulting and training, we now have an appropriate digital security policy in place and are ready to address risks and threats.”

Oksana Preobrazhenskaya, Legal Expert and Former Director,
International Protection Centre

Improving Access - HURIDOCS advanced our work with the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) to provide access to the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Commission and Court of Human Rights. This project is an example of how our partners' expertise on human rights information can combine effectively with our technical capacity to address sectoral needs. HURIDOCS contributed the information architecture to structure the collected jurisprudence, and the software development capability to create a multilingual website that works on all devices.



Strengthening Networks - HURIDOCS continued our work with Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), a regional network of NGOs, associations and trade unions of migrant workers, and individual advocates in Asia who are committed to protect and promote the rights and welfare of migrant workers. Together we localised the Forum's Hamsa database platform (built by our two organisations) into eight languages: Bahasa Indonesian, Burmese, Nepalese, Bengali, Cantonese, Thai, Malayalam, and Korean. The translated interface makes it easier for the MFA network of migrants' rights advocates to document hundreds of violations every month. These data are being used in regional, international and national advocacy campaigns.

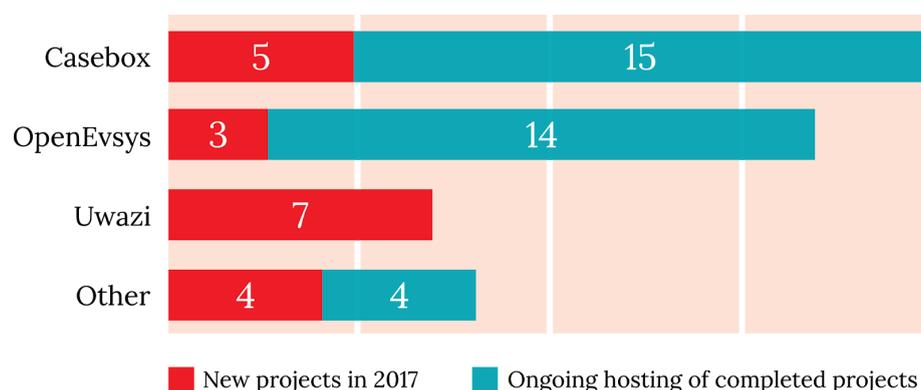
Designing Systems - HURIDOCS led projects with National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and Truth Commissions, working in Mali, Liberia and Sri Lanka. These projects focused on assessing the needs of Institutions or Commissions regarding complaint management and human rights monitoring systems, and implementing the systems. They involved fairly extensive trainings and sophisticated tool customisations to reflect the workflows of these institutions. Now implemented, the new systems allow the institutions to process complaints and depositions swiftly; track the status of complaints, as well as interventions that the institutions perform; and build datasets, based on depositions, that equip them to vet ex-combatants who are applying for public positions.

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HURIDOCS Design

HURIDOCS Design builds free and open source software tools that give defenders swift, deep insight into their documents and data. We create breakthrough solutions for collecting, extracting, analysing, and visualising human rights information. Our solutions include:

- [OpenEvsys](#) for documenting human rights violations;
- [Casebox](#) for managing human rights legal cases; and
- [Uwazi](#) for organising, analysing and publishing document collections.



In 2017, HURIDOCS continued to manage and host Casebox and OpenEvsys instances for our partners, as well as deploy new instances when needed. Maintenance and ongoing development were funded through service contracts with existing and new user organisations, extending the useful life and impact of tools first developed with dedicated grant funding. Any newly developed features were made available to all users. These activities reflected our commitment to long-term, community-driven software development and maintenance with the human rights movement.

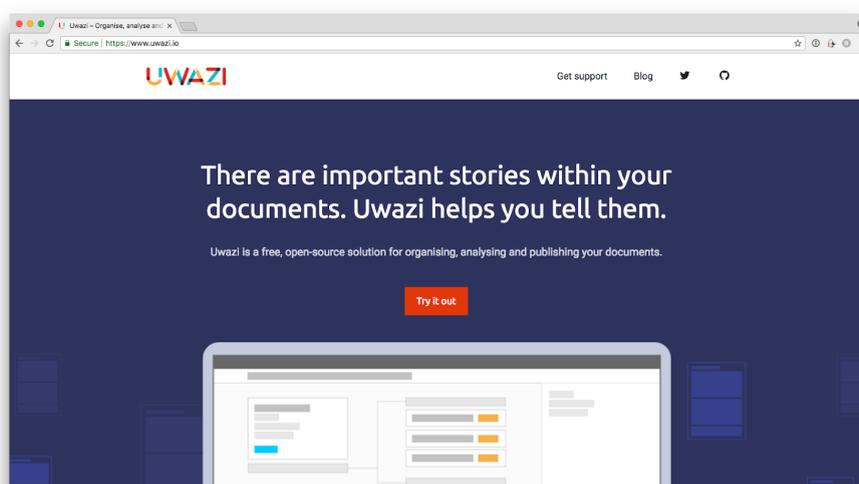
We also released our newest solution, a platform called Uwazi, which means “openness” in Swahili.

Representative Projects

Uwazi - After two years of intensive development and consultation with prospective users, HURIDOCs formally [launched Uwazi](#) at the NGO Forum in The Gambia in October 2017. We created Uwazi to address an information challenge that we had heard human rights defenders describe again and again: access to critical human rights information, such as case law.

Case law is a cornerstone of any legal system. Decisions on admissibility and judgments set precedents and trends for the future work of courts and bodies. It is essential for human rights lawyers to be able to identify relevant jurisprudence quickly, in order to give informed advice to clients and make the best possible arguments in court. However, institutions that possess this information often lack the human resources, technical capacity, or incentives to organise and share it in a useful way.

HURIDOCs collaborated with a pilot group of human rights organisations to design and build a tool that would empower them to manage important human rights document collections on their own.



We are proud to have launched three live Uwazi deployments in 2017:

- We worked with [the Center for Justice and International Law \(CEJIL\) to launch an updated collection](#) of cases from the Inter American Human Rights Court and Commission;
- We worked with the [Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria to launch an online database](#) of jurisprudence and commentary for the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights; and
- We worked with Japiqay to launch [Memoria y Ciudadanía](#), a collection of official reports, testimonies, court records, publications, news reports, photos, videos, and more that tell the story of systematic corruption in Peru over the past 30 years.

In 2018, HURIDOCS will [integrate machine learning into Uwazi](#), led by Natalie Widmann, our Artificial Intelligence specialist; improve the ways that users can create relationships between pieces of information in their Uwazi collection, which can unlock investigative capacity; and build in contemporary best practices for securing data and protecting users.

“In 2016, we witnessed the violent return to arms in Turkey and realised that our window of opportunity to document enforced disappearances was closing, but that we lacked the necessary technical knowledge to do it efficiently. Thanks to HURIDOCS’ support, we now have a database containing detailed information on 500 enforced disappearance victims. They may be disappeared but not forgotten, and we have accessible legal information that could be used in public efforts to end impunity.”

Gamze Hizli, Documentation Project Coordinator, Hakikat Adalet Hafiza Merkezi



RADAR - HURIDOCS partnered with FORUM-ASIA to develop [Review of Asian Diplomacy and Rights \(RADAR\)](#), an analytic platform and research tool on Asian states' performance at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). RADAR reuses data provided by [RightDocs](#), the tool that HURIDOCS developed independently in 2016 to make HRC resolutions, reports and decisions accessible to civil society organisations and human rights defenders in a structured, searchable and shareable format.

Building on this approach, we worked with FORUM-ASIA to develop an online database that organises information on the HRC activities of 19 Asian countries. The information includes membership dates; latest news; number of resolutions sponsored (as main sponsor or cosponsor); number of cases by topic; sponsorship of different agenda items; list of resolutions sponsored; statistics on communication records; and catalogue of recent communications. RADAR also hosts a platform where people can share blog posts relating to the 19 countries and human rights topics. Currently, the platform focuses on FORUM-ASIA members' three priorities: freedom of assembly and association, freedom of expression and human rights defenders.

RADAR was formally launched at a side event during the 36th session of the UN Human Rights Council, where Peggy Hicks, Director of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, praised RADAR as an approach that the OHCHR should learn from and build on, in order to make information more accessible.

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HURIDOCS Exchange

HURIDOCS Exchange strengthens information practices of the growing community involved in human rights advocacy, documentation, and fact finding. We convene human rights practitioners, information wranglers, and technologists to share knowledge and tactics for tackling the field's emerging challenges.

We launched HURIDOCS Exchange in 2016, believing that sector expertise is significant but scattered, and that human rights defenders would benefit greatly from having a safe space in which to exchange knowledge with others working on similar causes and in different contexts.

Representative Projects

The Collaboratory - In 2017, led by Kristin Antin, we “soft launched” a peer-to-peer discussion forum called the [HURIDOCS Collaboratory](#). We recruited 15 human rights practitioners to share their expertise and advice in live, recorded webinars on the following topics:

- [Documenting disappearances](#) (four-part series and discussion forum, Nov - Dec 2017)
- [Holistic security in practice](#) (webinar, May 2017)
- [Digitising documents](#) (discussion series hosted in May 2017)

For each theme, we provided an opportunity for live discussion, an online forum for asynchronous dialogue, recordings of the webinars, and written summaries of the entire exchange. By the close of 2017, the Collaboratory platform had more than 100 users, over 120 posts, and some 14,000 page views. The recordings of our online webinars have been viewed close to 500 times. These participation statistics are gratifying indicators of sector interest and impact.



Field Building Activities - In addition to hosting Collaboratory discussions, HURIDOCS took part in numerous human rights and information management convenings, in order to:

- **Share ideas and solicit feedback on new initiatives**
 - We presented [our ideas on integrating machine learning into Uwazi](#) and received important feedback at [RightsCon](#);
 - We facilitated a [discussion on sustaining open source development](#) at the [Internet Freedom Festival](#); and
 - We hosted a side event with Forum Asia at the UN Human Rights Council session.

- **Strengthen relationships with communities relevant to our work**
 - We participated in, and presented Uwazi to, the annual meeting of the [European Coordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation](#); and
 - We joined the [SAFETAG](#) advisory workshop to co-define the governance structure. Kristin Antin subsequently joined SAFETAG Steering Committee

- **Build exchanges with human rights defenders and address joint challenges**
 - We participated in the Civic Solidarity Platform in Warsaw, the COCONET camp for digital activism in Southeast Asia, and the [Data Investigation Camp](#) hosted by Tactical Tech and ShareLab; and
 - Friedhelm Weinberg [contributed to](#) the 'Data is a Team Sport' podcast series.

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Organisational Milestones

Staff and Board - Gisella Reina, a HURIDOCS Board member since 2014, assumed the Chair at the close of 2016. In February 2017, the Board announced the appointment of Friedhelm Weinberg as [HURIDOCS' new Executive Director](#). Kristin Antin added the role of Uwazi Product Owner to her role as Community Knowledge Manager in early 2017, and later accepted a promotion to Director of Programmes (effective January 2018).

Kristen Yawitz joined HURIDOCS to direct its fundraising and communications work. Clément Habinshuti joined HURIDOCS as a software developer, working initially on OpenEvsys and Casebox. Al Walid Chennoufi joined as Project Manager for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Last and far from least, we celebrated Bert Verstappen's [30th anniversary at HURIDOCS!](#)



Bert's Colleagues Wish Him a Lengthy Tenure

In 2017, we also completed our transition away from using contractors to support HURIDOCS' technology development, in favor of building an in-house team and an Agile software development approach, under the guidance of Chief Technology Officer Tomàs Andreu. That decision has delivered cross-cutting benefits, including faster service for our project partners, organisational cost savings, and improved technology-related

budget and planning accuracy. Our team of developers spans the globe (Kenya, Germany, Spain, Ecuador, and Nicaragua) and brings great diversity in educational, cultural and professional backgrounds.

Strategy – Friedhelm Weinberg initiated a strategy review process soon after assuming leadership of the organisation. The process was informed by conversations with partners and donors on both longstanding and emerging challenges, as well as visions that have not yet been realised. These conversations also explored changes in the global environment that the human rights movement now confronts. HURIDOCS supplemented these interviews with research on strategies of peer organisations in the field of human rights, information and technology.

At a staff retreat in April 2017, team members worked on articulating impact goals. Staff also reviewed feedback from partners, reflected on how the organisation needs to evolve, and mapped work plans for technology, projects and communications over the coming year. An external consultant, Dirk Slater of [fabriders](#), facilitated the retreat and has continued to help HURIDOCS identify organisational development challenges and effective ways of addressing them.



Team retreat in Tenerife, Spain. April 2017

A draft strategy document was developed in Fall 2017. HURIDOCS has solicited external and internal feedback to guide development of a formal Strategic Plan, which will be submitted for review by the HURIDOCS Board in 2018.

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Financials

In 2017, HURIDOCS received valued support from the following institutional funders: Oak Foundation, The Open Society Foundations, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Hivos International, The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Freedom House, Environmental Defense Fund, Swift Foundation, and Global Greengrants Fund.

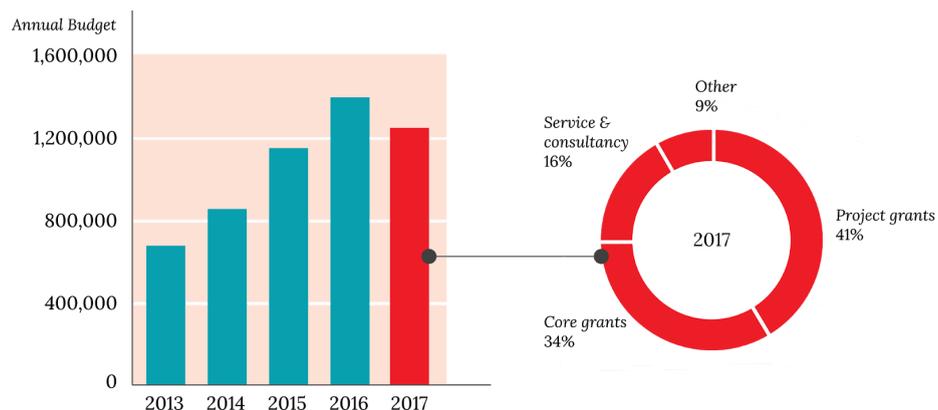
In addition to this contributed income, our 2017 service and consultancy income increased by more than 9% over 2016 levels. This robust growth in earned income strengthened HURIDOCS' financial resilience; equally important, these service contracts ensured that our work responded directly to partner organisations' needs.

HURIDOCS is committed to financial sustainability. We maintain an operating reserve, and closely review the financial and mission impact of individual projects on our overall portfolio. As part of our 2018-2020 strategy, HURIDOCS is exploring how a blended business model—one that covers operating costs through a combination of donated revenue (like grants) and profitable services (like software development contracts)—can support long-term innovation and sustainability. We are examining whether a blended model could detract in any way from HURIDOCS' mission focus.

A summary of 2017 financial information is provided on the following page.

2017 Breakdown of income

(in CHF)



Statement of operations (in CHF)	2017	2016	2015
Income			
Core grants	448,274	492,05	317,262
Project grants	538,823	707,274	785,012
Service & consulting income	215,777	200,876	84,725
Various other income	27,286	2,311	522
Contribution from reserve	89,310	0	0
Total income	1,319,470	1,402,518	1,187,521
Expenses			
Personnel & consultants	1,030,509	977,281	810,257
Travels, meetings & other costs	153,324	218,697	203,270
Office, financial & other costs	135,635	93,267	90,337
Contribution to reserve	0	113,190	90,243
Total expenses	1,319,468	1,402,435	1,178,107
Profit	2	83	9,414