

## **Raising awareness and mobilising civil society**

### **1. What ISHR does – training, advocacy, information**

We encourage HRDs to engage with international mechanisms because we believe that international mechanisms can add to domestic advocacy when strategically and carefully engaged with

We also believe that if engaging with international mechanisms is distracting an organisation from their domestic strategy then the organisation should not be engaging internationally – the whole purpose of engaging internationally is to achieve implementation of human rights standards at the domestic level.

### **2. SHOULD be part of a DOMESTIC advocacy strategy – we think this is key to mobilising civil society around international processes – and for example we ensure that those who attend our training courses submit an action plan which details a domestic advocacy strategy and shows clearly how their engagement in the international human rights mechanisms would provide an added and significant element.**

For those who focus solely on submitting reports, making statements, and not about what this is adding to the domestic picture, we say, think about your domestic advocacy strategy and what you are trying to achieve, think about what additional elements it would be useful to have and whether the international system can help you to achieve those elements. It's important to emphasise that the international system is not a magic cure, and that it is extremely limited in what it can achieve directly. The most effective way to use it is as complementary to a domestic advocacy strategy

### **3. When think of intl system it does seem far away and irrelevant to domestic situations, as after all what can it really achieve. I think thinking in this way is to miss the point that the system in fact can indeed achieve very little, but when combined with an effective domestic strategy it can tip the balance and provide the missing element.**

CAT example.

### **4. UPR is esp. important mechanism when it comes to domestic advocacy strategies**

UPR a domestic process with a brief moment in Geneva

### **5. Where are the points around which civil society can be mobilised?**

The preparation of the national report and NGO reports are both natural points of coincidence between national level work and the international system

It can be a natural part of domestic advocacy strategies to participate in consultations and to raise your advocacy points in these fora

The consultations themselves are a means to sensitise others to the issues you work on, can be opportunity to network, to form coalitions with others working on similar issues

Should the govt hold consultations this is a good chance to meet key govt figures, to make your points directly to them, to forge a relationship

All of this holds as part of a strong domestic advocacy strategy regardless of whether or not your recommendations are taken forwards and included in the national report or the stakeholders' report – the UPR provides additional channels to pursue domestic advocacy work and should be approached primarily in this light

You can therefore do it without being distracted from your own domestic strategy and indeed in many cases it should be a part of that strategy and will add to it

6. Can develop media opportunities too based on the higher profile of the UPR process, to give added edge to your story. Could do this at any stage e.g. consultations, or when UPR is taking place report on how your advocacy points are raised (even if those points are raised independently of any lobbying you might or might not have done) – which States raised them etc. And afterwards the outcome report is another press opportunity to highlight points relevant to your own advocacy.

Having the UPR stamp on it gives additional weight and can be simply and easily integrated into your own domestic strategy

Again, this should factor neatly into domestic advocacy strategy and if you have a developed media strategy, there would be no reason not to bring in recommendations that come from international mechanisms, where they coincide with your advocacy goals, as in most if not all cases this can only add to the weight of the case being made

7. Greater visibility attached to your case if you associate it with the recommendations that come from an international body such as the UPR working group
8. You may have more to lose through not engaging, or at least following what is happening – as you know one of the features of the UPR process is that states can reject the recommendations made to them. If they do so they are effectively saying we don't see ourselves as under any obligation to implement this recommendation. If this happens to be a recommendation relating to an area you work on, it can really undermine your work to have that position taken by the government in the report of an international body, and then have that report adopted, i.e. made official, by that international body. While you may not be able to get the government to accept the recommendation, at least if you are aware, you can ensure that you highlight the government's rejection and use it to further your own cause by mobilising public opinion against the government position. It could be quite effectively done.
9. Where recommendations are accepted, then you have the leverage to push the government to implement. The endorsement by the UPR process, and ultimately by the HRC, gives added weight to your own advocacy and that can be very effective in lobbying for change.

It doesn't take much for organisations to implement these things into their domestic advocacy – just going and looking back at the latest UPR report for your country and identifying recs relevant to your own advocacy goals is simple to do, and you then have a whole additional argument to bring before the government or other relevant authorities.

Keeping track of what the govt says internationally is also important because it could be undermining your work, and it could also be contrary to what the government tells people on the ground. For

example, not directly relevant to UPR but, the govt of SA tried to bring a resn against SOGI about a year and a half ago, even though its own constitution on this matter is one of the most progressive in the world. Once civil society was made aware they were outraged as it undermined their own work - and in fact they used that outrage constructively and managed to get SA to change its position and bring a pro-SOGI resn.