ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS

CONFERENCE, 4 – 5 JUNE 2011

THE UNIVERSITY of York

Freedom from Torture
Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty international is a global movement of more than 3 million supporters, members and activists in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights. Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and public donations.

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Freedom from Torture (formerly known as The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture) was set up 25 years ago by Helen Bamber and other clinicians working with Amnesty International opposing torture abroad who wanted to give practical help to the many thousands of torture survivors who arrive in the UK.

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Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

The Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR) at the University of York, UK, is an inter-departmental research and teaching centre focused on applied human rights, founded in 2007.

THE UNIVERSITY of York

Copies of this report can be requested from the Individuals team at individuals@amnesty.org

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Cover photo: Attendees at a group session of the 'Active participation in human rights' conference, held at Amnesty International's headquarters in London, June 2011.
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THE ORGANIZERS WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL OF THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTED THEIR TIME AND EXPERTISE DURING THE APPLICATION STAGE, THE CONFERENCE AND THROUGHOUT THE FOLLOW UP. WITHOUT THEIR INPUT THIS REPORT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

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FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

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OUR VISION

"Freedom from Torture desires a world where torture and organized violence have been vanquished and where their lasting consequences are recognized and redressed."

OUR MISSION:

"Freedom from Torture is a human rights organization that exists to enable survivors of torture and organized violence to engage in a healing process to assert their own human dignity and worth. Our concern for the health and well-being of torture survivors and their families is directed towards providing medical and social care, practical assistance, and psychological and physical therapy. It is also our mission to raise public awareness about torture and its consequences."

UNIVERSITY OF YORK: CENTRE FOR APPLIED HUMAN RIGHTS

The Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR) at the University of York is an inter-departmental research and teaching centre, founded in 2007.

THE CENTRE:

- Offers a unique fellowship scheme for human rights defenders at risk
- Runs an MA in Applied Human Rights and an LLM in International Human Rights Law and Practice
- Conducts research, often in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, on human rights and development, transitional justice, refugee law, and the practical challenges facing human rights defenders
- Hosts the *Journal of Human Rights Practice* (Oxford University Press)
- Organizes events on pressing human rights issues, including conferences and workshops on 'Transformative Justice' (November 2010), 'Human Rights Defenders and Peace Processes' (May 2010), 'Social Justice in Challenging and Changing Times' (November 2009), and 'The Responsibility to the Story' (September 2009)

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1 INTRODUCTION

"A space to develop ideas and share best practice suggestions."

On 4 and 5 June 2011, human rights practitioners[1] from across the globe were brought together at Amnesty International's International Secretariat in London to attend the 'Active Participation in Human Rights Conference'.

The aim of the conference was to provide a space in which participants could explore the possibilities and challenges of active participation within human rights research, advocacy and campaigning through real-life examples shared during small 'dilemma'[2] discussions and interactive plenary sessions.

The conference focused mainly on practical discussions, which were preceded with a brief outline of the current debate on active participation theory.[3] This was done for two reasons; firstly, so that participants could start discussions from a similar conceptual framework and, secondly, to ensure that those who were unfamiliar with the conceptual framework were not isolated as discussions progressed.

Key speakers and delegates then presented their own experiences of using active participation in a human rights context. Plenary sessions were followed by dilemma groups that explored the four themes that emerged during the application process. These were survivor voice, power dynamics, internal organizational governance and human rights education and empowerment. The dilemma group leaders presented case studies that exemplified the four themes. These sessions were run on a rotation to facilitate smaller group discussions and encourage participants to share experiences and methods that have worked for them, and identify the challenges they faced when using participatory methodologies. It was hoped that within this space, suggestions of best practice would emerge.

This conference report aims to provide an outline of each session, the key findings and any action points. It is important to note that the recommendations and suggestions given here are not intended to be concrete conclusions on how active participation should or could be implemented in human rights work. Rather, they should be seen as a springboard from which ideas can develop and be adapted to the different and unique contexts in which we all work.

Questions regarding the conference can be directed to any of the partner organizations at individuals@amnesty.org.

2 EXPLORING PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS WORK

The opening session of the conference aimed to provide a theoretical framework for delegates to take forward throughout both days. The session first explored various definitions and interpretations of participation within human rights work. It then presented a working framework developed by Amnesty International for understanding active participation in this context.

KEY POINTS FROM THE SESSION

- Participation is an umbrella term for a range of different approaches.

- There is debate about whether participation should be viewed as a 'hierarchy' (where more participation is seen as necessarily better) or as 'spokes on a wheel' (where the ideal form of participation is context-specific).

- More participation can be desirable in that it may increase individuals' sense of ownership over human rights principles, give rights holders increased control over self-representation (as opposed to individuals being represented by human rights practitioners) and build rights-holder capacity . However, more participation may not always lead to better practice. For instance, consider the implications of involving survivors in campaigning without offering them counseling/psycho-social support for any difficulties that may arise from their stories being made public.

- The core component of the working framework/definition[4] of active participation is a breakdown of different forms of participation varying from 'informing' (understood as a 'low' level of participation) to 'stakeholder control' (understood as 'full' participation). The working framework/definition identifies 'legitimate consultation' as the threshold for 'active participation'. The session discussion raised the question of how key terms are being defined within the framework. It was asserted that the term 'rights holder' was too broad to be meaningful given that, within human rights, we seem to be interested in encouraging particular individuals/groups to participate.

The discussion also raised the question of how human rights practitioners ensure we draw on conceptual understandings and lessons learned within related fields, such as development. It was suggested that before advocating participatory approaches within human rights work we need to ensure we have examined the mistakes made and good practice learned within these fields. Participants felt that it was unclear whether Amnesty International's framework offered something new as it resembled previous participatory approaches. In response to this, it was suggested that the framework was not intended as something new but to encourage Amnesty

International staff to consider deeper forms of participation at various stages of their project cycles. It was also intended to anchor discussions around a starting definition of active participation.

3 KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Professor Sarah Deer, an activist, law professor, and citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma, presented the Keynote address. She spoke of her experiences of partnering with Amnesty International on the *Maze of Injustice*[5], a report that focused on Native American and Alaska Native women's experiences of sexual violence in the United States.

The *Maze of Injustice* report was produced using participatory methods. Building trust and developing the research agenda in co-operation with tribal communities created a greater sense of legitimacy and potentially allowed the research process to be an empowering one for the women involved. Professor Deer explained that those choosing to tell their stories were doing so in order to be "no longer invisible" and so that "those outside of their native communities would maybe understand them". This is not to say that Native people wanted to be a part of the process. Some individuals chose not to be involved, concerned that a European organization would be unable to do justice to their issues, and expressing frustration that "being studied" previously had not resulted in positive change. Listening to individual concerns encouraged reflection by the researchers and resulted in greater care in ensuring the report did not perpetuate the negative stereotypes that Indian women are merely victims with nothing substantial to contribute to the human rights movement.

The public launch of the report continued to emphasize the importance of listening to tribal concerns first and foremost. The aim was to make the launch as participatory as possible by having Native people present at every stage of the process. Amnesty International USA provided resources for one of the survivors interviewed in the report to attend the press conference. In addition, a traditional healer from the Sicangu Lakota Nation, Jim Clairmont, provided a morning ceremony and prayer for those participating in the press conference.

The report was greeted with significant interest by the media and Congress. Staffers from Capitol Hill contacted Amnesty International staff and arranged meetings within a few days of the launch. Over the next three years, Amnesty International researchers partnered with Native women to advise staffers and help shape responsive legislation. These discussions culminated in the establishment of a Maze of Injustice Advisory committee and changes in federal law in line with the majority of recommendations made in the report, to be implemented within three years of its release. Such significant impact probably could not have been achieved if either Amnesty International or the Native women's advocates had acted alone.

Below are a number of the key issues that arose in the process of producing the *Maze of Injustice* report:

- What may work in one community may not necessarily be transposed and used in another. There are important cultural differences between communities.

- Language is key. Using terms and definitions from 'the outside' fails to reflect the realties of the communities. For example, in the United States there are 565 separate tribal nations – each one has its own history, language, culture, and legal system.

- In practice, it is not always feasible to conduct research in all communities. It is important to justify why research focuses on particular communities/areas. In the report, Alaska was one of the three areas of focus because it has the highest level of rape in the United States, with a disproportionate impact on Native women.

- Do not start with a pre-determined research agenda; let the communities decide the research focus by listening openly to their stories and the issues that concern them. In this case the Native women were asked "what stories would you like to tell?" and "how would you hope publicity would alleviate your concerns?" In this way potential outcomes were directed by the grassroots activists.

- Alert the communities of the possible risks of participating in the research. If you fail to do this, you could lose trust and access to the community – an obstacle to change.

- Engage with the communities on their terms. This helps to build trust and respect and ensures that communities' concerns are better reflected in any reports, recommendations or campaign objectives. This should mean that any changes in law, policy or practice have local relevance. For this project, those involved in the research process would stay near the communities and share meals with Native people.

- Explain who you are and the work you have done in the past. In this case, Professor Deer and her colleagues asked the tribal communities if they had any questions about the project and what they wanted from it.

- Had there been the opportunity, a national roundtable discussion with tribal communities of the findings would have been useful before publishing the report. This could have ensured that the report was more inclusive, that more stories could be told and that the changes would be in line with as many tribal communities' wishes as possible.

4 DILEMMA SESSIONS

Each of the four dilemmas are outlined below, followed by a brief synopsis of the case studies and the 'good practice' suggestions that were submitted by practitioners through first-hand experience. These suggestions are in no way asserting that every situation is the same and that they will work regardless of the context, but they offer some practical considerations that participants have found or may find beneficial.

4.1 INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

The dilemma concerned the challenge of how to ensure the participation of all stakeholders and employees in organizational governance.

CASE STUDY

An international organization working on women's rights decided to launch a new project addressing violence against women. The board of directors and senior staff of the organization, which comprised 19 men and one woman, were invited to a planning meeting by the managing director of the organization. Five female non-management staff working in the organization as social organizers were not invited to participate. The result of the planning meeting was a five-year plan to address the issue of violence against women in specific target communities. After a mid-term external evaluation, it was reported that the project was not able to achieve its goals and meet the needs of women in the target communities because they, and the women social organizers (who work very closely at community level), were not involved in the planning. Now, the organization wants to change the project, and is thinking of building a strategy to involve all stakeholders in the project planning, implementation, and evaluation.

SESSION

The dilemma leader began the session with an outline of the dilemma and case study, asking the group to consider whether they too have faced similar situations. The group was asked why they felt it was important for a rights holder to actively participate, to which a variety of responses emerged, including: to create a sense of ownership, to ensure sustainability, and to save time and money. The discussion asked "how do we, as human rights practitioners, ensure the active participation of all stakeholders?" The suggestions that the groups found most useful were grouped into the following clusters:

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Make organizations accountable to stakeholders. This creates a sense of empowerment within communities and ensures those in charge of projects are listening to the rights holders. Consequently, projects are more likely to be successful.

- Create a Responsibilities charter for all stakeholders in which roles and responsibilities are agreed. Ensure that this is done early on so that issues and disagreements can be minimized.

PARTICIPATION/EVALUATION

- Carry out regular evaluations of the project so that you can ascertain how effective the process is and make adjustments if necessary.

- Ensure that the views of staff directly involved in projects are incorporated within the evaluation process. The closer you are to the realities for the people who are working on/with the project, the more effective your project will be.

REMOVING OBSTACLES

- To ensure individuals can participate there is the need for capacity building, training and resources.

- Ensure the security of participants by creating safe spaces – the presence of risk can prevent many from participating.

OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

- Create a space for all to express their concerns and collectively brainstorm/define problems to be solved.

- Involve rights holders from an early stage so that you create a sense of ownership that is more likely to last.

- Initially consult rights holders without a pre-defined agenda. This would mean that the project is more likely to reflect the rights holders' needs.

- Make sure that when you organize meetings you provide the structure for rights holders to attend. This can include ensuring the location and time of the meeting is suitable, that there is child care available, and financial compensation for the loss of income. Finally, should the rights holders not be able to attend, make sure you provide another means of communication, such as online groups.

- Stakeholders must be informed about the whole programme in which they are involved.

INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

- Create advisory panels which include stakeholders.

- Organize subgroup meetings so that any existing cultural understandings/power dynamics do not discourage participation.

- Simultaneously train rights holders and staff, preferably in the field, so there is better mutual understanding and the relationship between the two (especially in terms of trust) is established at an earlier stage.

4.2 HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

This dilemma looked at whether active participation leads to empowerment, and in the instances in which it does, discusses the circumstances that were present. The potential for empowerment was explored through a case study in human rights education (HRE), as it is often assumed that HRE cannot be efficiently delivered at community level without beneficiaries and key actors actively participating.

CASE STUDY

Amnesty International's Africa HRE project is fostering a culture of active participation in order to empower the communities they are working with. The aim is to enable communities to solve their human rights concerns by themselves. In Sierra Leone, the Africa HRE project is working with a local partner NGO to engage with a group of Soweis (female genital mutilation [FGM] practitioners) to fight FGM in communities where nearly all girls are initiated. As a result of training sessions, discussions and health information on the harms of this traditional practice, the Soweis have decided not to initiate any girl below 18. This decision has been met with tough opposition from both women and men. The activism of these women, considered as the guardians of traditions, is seen as a provocation by some men. Threats have been made to the Soweis, some of whom now live in fear.

SESSION

The session began by outlining the dilemma and screening a short film[6] on Amnesty International's HRE project (summarized above). This helped to focus discussions on key ethical questions and the delegates' own experiences with active participation in HRE. It was felt that at the core of the discussions was that active participation should come from within. For the NGO, HRE leading to empowerment takes time: the act of changing mindsets is a long-term process, so being humble, listening, supporting and respecting communities' realities and experiences is key. Empowerment is a mutual learning process.

- It is important to be flexible and creative with our tools and methods as factors such as illiteracy can often be an obstacle to active participation. The use of images or role-play exercises to discuss human rights issues can actively involve more members of the community. People often find it enjoyable and less daunting than discussing the issues in 'real life', and through this they can learn more about their rights.

- When it is deemed appropriate and safe, bringing the victim and the perpetrators together can be a helpful approach. The discussion on this point was based on the idea that in some situations speaking to 'victims' alone will not create change; that practitioners need also to change the behavior of perpetrators; and finally that having perpetrators hear directly from victims can be powerful.

- Using local resources is beneficial as it helps to build trust.

- Building capacities and encouraging a platform of expression.

- It is important to understand the community you are working in and to understand the root causes of the issues for effective intervention. Talking in the language of needs rather than rights can often facilitate dialogue and entry in the communities.

- Find concrete deliverables.

- HRE should not only empower communities but also individuals: victims/survivors should be given the opportunity to actively participate.

- It is important to build alliances and partnership: mobilization and solidarity is important to break the isolation of victims/survivors.

- Empowered rights holders and disempowered duty-bearers can lead to failure since the latter also need to know more about human rights issues and how they can solve them: change should be accepted by all stakeholders.

- Empowerment is creating frictions in families: providing a network of support and conveying this risk to the individual is essential.

- Finally, HRE should explore how to support the communities with advocacy for more impact.

4.3 SURVIVOR VOICE

This dilemma session looked at how survivor voices could be effectively integrated into campaigning and fundraising activities without compromising the dignity and interests of the individual concerned. The dilemma sought to explore the actions that practitioners could take to ensure that the participation of survivors can be active, meaningful and most importantly based on informed consent. The challenge that the session addressed was how practitioners can bring the horrors of human rights violations to the negotiating table in a manner that respects the fundamental precepts of participant-driven human rights activism.

CASE STUDY

The Mine Ban Treaty represented one of the first occasions in which survivors were involved in the process of negotiations, actively campaigning for the treaty, and for the provisions to ensure assistance was provided to them. Since then, participation of survivors has been recognized as essential, but over time it seems to have become nominal. There is a sense that survivors are often "wheeled out" and given statements to read that do not reflect their own voice to allow the "box" for "survivor participation" to be checked off.

SESSION

There was a general sense amongst participants that although their organizations are keen to ensure survivors are actively participating in campaigning, communications and fundraising, there was a gap in the policies and structures needed to do this effectively. Participants

expressed that organizations needed to give clear warnings[7] to the survivor about the implications of telling their story and divulging their identity according to the media/mode of communication[8] and placement of the story. Experienced practitioners shared their suggestions of best practice which have been grouped into four main areas of concern below. The delegates also discussed consent and agreed upon a shared understanding of consent which is captured subsequent to the recommendations below.

Managing expectations and explaining how organizational priorities may differ from survivors' priorities. A lack of clear communication between the survivor and the organization can potentially result in conflict so it is suggested that organizations need to:

- Differentiate between the role of the organization in determining its messages and the say of individual survivors.

- Set and agree the time line for the use of any story.

- Be clear that the use of a story is for the organization to decide, and it may decide in future not to use a particular narrative.

- Clarify that the organization is not necessarily representing the survivor but working with them so that they can speak for themselves.

- Recognize that participants are not only victims – they are agents of change – and that setting a clear plan for how survivors can participate in creating change working within the organization is important.

- Set and communicate the limits[9] to the amount of persuasion appropriate in recruiting survivors to engage in public facing work.

Ensuring survivor 'approval'[10] and intention. Tensions between the organization and survivor can arise when a survivor feels their intention is not reflected in the use of their story. To avoid this, the organization should ensure that when speaking with the survivor there is:

- An agreement as to where and how their story will be used so the organization may capture what survivors intend to accomplish.

- Provision of clear examples of how their stories might be used.

- Active engagement in agreeing key messages and reviewing them over time so that the person is not seen as 'forever a victim'.

- Building of trust, acknowledging it takes time and that many victims have little experience of public life.

Organizations must actively manage story/narrative use. Tensions can emerge when stories told by survivors are not managed. To avoid conflict, organizations should ensure that they:

- Track current and future intended use with time limits and have an exit strategy for each participant and their story.

- Collect more than one emblematic story to avoid creating 'heroes' or survivor fatigue by using a small range of narratives repeatedly.

- Inform survivors of risks and timing of publications.

The organization's structures and processes, from governance to daily management, need to be set up to support participatory work with survivors. It should:

- Have policies to guide work in relation to survivor participation.

- Regularly test assumptions about the need to use certain types of narratives and images – especially in relation to fundraising – as the organization may be able to secure organizational campaigning and fundraising goals without the use of survivor stories or images.

- Have a clear and agreed conflict of interest and complaints procedure that has been consulted on with survivors.

- Develop monitoring and accountability processes to ensure that survivors' participation is active and follows appropriate and agreed standards.

- Hold an 'information management review' to check that policies are in line with data protection regimes.

Consent is the most important issue in regard to survivor voice and must be achieved because the survivor 'owns' their story. Consent is:

- Informed and for a specific purpose (in that it is tailored to each particular use of the story and the individual survivor's needs).

- Responsive and reflects the demands of new media

- Reviewed and renewed over time.

- Given provided there is a cooling off period, with an option to withdraw at any stage.

- Clear about the policy and practice on the use of pseudonyms or ensuring the anonymity of survivors.

4.4 POWER DYNAMICS

This dilemma explored the challenge brought on through various power dynamics to active participation. Power was conceptualized as being both formal (through governance structures) and informal (though community and/or family power dynamics).

CASE STUDY

The dilemma was explored by looking at children as rights holders and the right to education without discrimination, with a focus on Romani children. Romani children's access to education and the issue of their segregation in special education is a significant issue in Slovakia. There the Roma constitute an ethnic minority facing a disproportionate level of poverty and marginalization as a result of discrimination and historic exclusion. Power dynamics that were in play were not only formal governance structures within schools that chose to send the Roma children to the special schools – but the parents who 'accepted' the decision.

SESSION

The session began with an outline of the dilemma and the initial questions it raised to ensure that the group would be prepared for the role-play exercise based on the case study. The use of role-play proved to be an engaging participatory method as it quickly highlighted issues surrounding power dynamics. Through the discussions, the following suggestions as to how best to campaign for change were proposed:

- Carry out a power dynamic analysis. You cannot expect to challenge unfavourable power dynamics without knowing exactly how they interact. This analysis is a continuing process as dynamics change over time.

- Address different power holders and do not just work with rights holders in order to deal with that power imbalance. More specifically, bring different stakeholders together by discussing the issue indirectly at first.

- Active participation must address the needs from within communities and those of rights holders. Practitioners external to the process must also show empathy for the perspectives of the power holders to improve the likelihood of engagement by all parties (including those opposing a human rights agenda).

- Take into consideration that human rights practitioners are also part of the power dynamics and avoid paternalistic approaches of entering as experts who know the "answer" regardless of the position of the rights holders or other actors.

- It is important to understand and work on issues that underlie the power imbalance and to address them in a non-accusatory manner (for example, lack of education of parents, historic exclusion, and discrimination).

- Make sure that when speaking to different power holders, you discuss issues in accessible ways; use understandable language, not just legal language or perspectives.

- As there are different understandings and approaches to human rights issues, you may need to discuss and educate people about their rights before entering a campaign stage.

- For campaigns to have a sustainable impact we need to be able to work and engage with communities, especially marginalized communities – human rights education and empowerment processes are integral.

- A participatory approach may not always be necessary. In certain situations where the objectives are at a legal level or there is an urgent need to take action on behalf of an individual, there may not be the time to engage in active participation.

- Look at each organization's added value, understand the limits of what you are doing and make sure that all those involved are aware of this.

- Risk assessments must be done in a participatory way. People who are at risk often understand what dangers are present as they are most familiar with and affected by the situation. Listen and understand how to mitigate that risk and support them when in a position to do so.

5 SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

After feedback from participants that they wanted to hear more practical experiences from other delegates, this plenary session changed format from being led by a pre-determined speaker to opening the floor up to conference delegates. Without being restricted to a particular dilemma topic, the delegates were encouraged to share stories, experiences and challenges around participation. A few of the stories presented are included below[11]:

SURVIVOR VOICES

A campaigner on mental health issues began by laying out the guiding principle of her project: that in order to legitimately campaign on mental health it was vital to include those who were working within this area as well as those who are affected by mental health issues.

As with most project work, funder support came with certain obligations and in this case one of the requirements was that they set up an 'expert by experience advisory panel'. Their role was to be involved in developing and implementing the campaign, which made the process of finalizing a campaign a long, often emotionally draining and difficult procedure. Despite this it was integral in order to gain trust and have the most effective impact on mental health legislation. Throughout this process the advisory panel had to be consulted and consistently involved in decisions, which also called for her organization to be honest about what it could and could not do. She explained that although agreeing on objectives caused the process to be slow, it also gave those a part of the panel a sense of meaningful involvement and enhanced the legitimacy of the work carried out during the project.

She explained, "When thinking about active participation, you need to recognize where active participation is necessary and what it will look like. You need to be aware of the fact that people will want to walk away, and you have to be accepting of this. For us a key issue that emerged was that the survivors that were coming in needed a per diem for their time. They are experts for having gone through that experience and should be compensated for their time".

She also explained that the stigma attached to mental health issues meant that in order to ensure legitimacy and avoid contributing to the social stigma, the affected individuals were involved all the way and not just pulled in at the end to tick the box for survivor participation.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

"My story is about my experiences working with social movements and the challenges that emerged". The speaker, who worked in development and human rights in Nepal, discussed working with agricultural families who had lived on the land for generations, laboring extensively to pay off the capital and the interest to their landlords. He was working with these communities at a time when political awareness was also increasing in the country, and

a movement was suddenly triggered around this issue. The movement sought freedom from the landlords, and the government ended up declaring them free from the charges.

Although the people were initially successful, other challenges emerged. Anger grew as a sizable number of those promised an area of land did not receive it and, as a result, decided to protest. In order to help the protesters air their frustrations, his organization planned to provide food for the movement during three days of demonstrations. When the situation did not change in three days, the protests continued – for a far longer period than expected. His organization did not have the funds budgeted to continue support, and there was further complication when protesters captured land illegally. This meant that by funding the protests his organization could be supporting an illegal action. The speaker concluded that you cannot ultimately control or predict the actions a movement will take when they are in the lead, so organizations must remain flexible while ensuring that they do not compromise their core values.

PARTICIPATORY PHOTO PROJECT

The speaker, a delegate from South America, spoke about a participatory photography project his organization ran. It sought to allow community members to "portray in a very realistic way the situation in which the Indigenous communities live in their country through a community-led photography project". The first phase of the project was to set up training workshops, followed by holding meetings with the leaders of the communities in order to explain how to use the photo equipment. Members of the communities were then given cameras and began to take pictures of their day-to-day lives.

The speaker briefly discussed what was learned from the project. He mentioned that there was a lot of positive feedback: the communities liked the democratic nature of the work carried out, in that each group of Indigenous photographers had total control of what they produced; they were in charge of the agenda and the schedule. He also stated that his organization felt it was important not to go in and encourage any particular way of doing things. The result was that those involved in the project became better educated not only in human rights issues affecting them, but also in how to draw attention to these violations through the medium of photography, both of which could be taken back into their communities. On the other hand, it was found that during this process men dominated the women – a discovery that would be taken into account for future projects.

GOVERNANCE

The speaker began by stating that "service users need to be incorporated into the way we are run as a larger organization". He explained that his organization set up groups comprising service users who are experts by experience, and therefore best suited to discuss the projects the organization is seeking to set up. Discussions with the group of experts allows for an organization to connect more effectively with those they are seeking to help. He explained that the conversations brought to light the potential for a cultural clash; that "some needs of the organization may not align with the character of the individuals they are working with". In this case, many service users were not used to complaining, so instead of criticizing the functioning of the project, they remained silent. It was through engagement that this problem was discovered, discussed and rectified.

6 SURVIVORS AS ADVOCATES

This session was led by the Survivors Speak Out network. It explored the challenges that survivors experience, the importance of transparency and minimizing risk when survivors speak out.

Originally choosing to speak out to break barriers, the session leaders explained that as survivors they felt it was important to make those who can change policies understand torture survivors' experiences by campaigning as a group of 'experts through experience' – "as victims of torture, we know better than anyone else to speak out and make a change. Why? Because that was my life. It's my voice, my history."

The survivors identified certain challenges – the trauma they went through, their vulnerability and ability to speak for themselves, which was occasionally further hindered when they were unable to speak the language. Despite these complex challenges, a core issue was to ensure that the organization was building trust with the survivor, ensuring that each individual was involved in the process. The survivor would help to decide the information that would be confidential or published to minimize risks. The survivors highlighted the distress of images or names becoming public without a survivor's consent – a clear obstacle to healing and engagement. Despite these obstacles and fears, survivors are likely to actively participate if they have the necessary respect and support, both financial and psycho-social.

"We are survivors. We go to the communities ourselves and engage with them so that they understand us directly." This community interaction is important as having the opportunity to explain their experiences has a positive effect on understanding. It can also potentially counteract some of the negative group stereotypes that are often fuelled by the media. When stories are made public, there is a very real risk of survivors becoming so traumatized by the attention they receive that they need to get psychiatric help again. Therefore every action needs to be thought about extensively.

7 ETHICS AND PRACTICALITIES OF PARTICIPATORY VIDEO AND CITIZEN SOCIAL MEDIA IN HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

WITNESS[12] , a global organization specialized in training and supporting people in the use of video for human rights advocacy, led the session on the use of video and social media for participation in human rights work. The group also led discussions of new directions in citizen media, exemplified in the Arab Spring. In an era of increasing citizen documentation and social media interaction the session sought to encourage delegates to think beyond what active participation means within an institutional frame towards understanding social media as a form of active participation.

The session began by drawing attention to the increasing potential for active participation in human rights work, resulting from the growing ability of people to create and share media that documents their experience and advocates change. Following on from this delegates were given hand-held cameras and asked to film one another talking in order to think about what they found simple and challenging about video as a tool for documentation. Delegates noted that being able to speak the same language was not critical in the documentation of events, and crucially the cameras themselves are easy to use. The fact that they are widely available means that they are a viable tool for active participation and empowerment especially as they are standard features on mobile phones that often have internet access. Challenges noted by delegates included that the presence of the camera changed the dynamics and made some people more reserved. Other concerns included the control over narrative that happens in the editing process, as well as issues around consent and understanding of how the material will be used. It was also noted that with mobile filming, data such as GPS location and whose phone material was shot on, may be contained in the metadata of the image, carrying unexpected risks.

A short film providing a brief practical guide for first time users of video advocacy was screened, which is summarized below:[13]

- Assessing risk is important, as risks occur when you film, edit and distribute.

- An advocacy video has a clear goal in mind for change, coupled with a defined audience that can help achieve it. The audience can be large or small; it's their ability to act that is important.

- Once you have created your video you need to get it out at the right place at the right time – timing is critical. You can organize a day of action and mobilize a community to take action, or put a video in front of a judge or a policy maker about to vote on legislation.

- What do you want your audience to do? Make sure you have a direct and concrete request of action underlining your video. Often a sentence with an action verb is useful; for example: FREE prisoners of conscience.

- What is the best way to convey your message to your audience? The story and images you use are key, so make sure it is emotive and persuasive, well-grounded in personal experience as well as in a specific time and place. Let those affected by the issue speak for themselves.

- Go for informed consent. Try to ensure that those you film provide consent. This means they understand the risks and benefits of being filmed and on that basis make the choice of being filmed, telling you if they need their identity to be concealed. You may need to talk them through worst-case scenarios, such as what would happen if their oppressor saw the film.

- Place the video in a campaign context and engage your audience to act. Make them feel included and engaged; give them clear options as to what they can do next.

Following on from the brief practical guide, the speaker moved on to discuss the various styles and creators of citizen videos by playing delegates a series of clips. These ranged from raw visual evidence documenting an event to individual testimony featuring those who are purposeful advocates or even those who were perpetrators of human rights violations. By discussing the variety of video documentation available online, the speaker drew attention to the most interesting emerging trend; that more people are able to produce and publish videos without an NGO or filmmaker mediating. With this in mind WITNESS have identified a number of ways NGOs and human rights advocates should be responding to events:

- Contextualizing and incorporating widespread citizen documentation of testimonies/raw evidence through the use of tools like Storyful (storyful.com), and Crowdvoice (crowdvoice.org). This will help to create an accurate and verifiable account of events by providing a space in which evidence can be pieced together.

- Building their audiences via online platforms and regular video blogs which often result in more meaningful engagement due to the content being more personal.

- Creating opportunities for participation in gathering data, and creating advocacy tools by generating remix videos from existing footage, contests, and participatory documentation of events.[14]

- Updating from the field via live-casting, which helps to engage people and emphasizes the fact that these are events happening in real time (see use of the mobile video tool Bambuser in Egypt around January 25 movement).

Alongside these approaches, three key challenges were highlighted in relation to citizen video and social media/increased participation. These three elements were:

- Dealing with issues of dignity, safety, consent and anonymity.
- Authentication and the evidentiary value of footage.
- Ensuring that footage translates into storytelling or visual evidence that compels action.

Continuing the discussion of video responses, the speaker highlighted examples of authentication and verification from various countries including Bahrain, people annotating YouTube videos to indicate alternate views on a shooting; from Syria, in which Ahmad Bayasi countered a misleading official explanation of a video showing military violence with his own video documenting the location of the incident and the victims[15]; from the UK, the police violence towards Ian Tomlinson was recorded by a bystander, and from Iran in which 'Only Mehdi' acted as a curator of citizen footage from Iran during the Green Movement[16] . Further to this the speaker acknowledged other crowd-sourced verification and contextualization approaches such as Crowdvoice, Storify, or Storyful[17]. These approaches illustrate an exciting era in participatory video and highlight the impact that both individuals and networks can have in challenging the dominant narrative.

In relation to human rights values of dignity, consent, and privacy, the risks run by protestors in Burma and Iran caught on camera were highlighted. These included how arrests took place on the basis of people identified from footage shot in both situations; the Iranian government's use of crowd-sourcing to ask for people's assistance in identifying opposition activists seen in videos[18]; and also the importance of anonymity (in certain circumstances) to enable free expression[19].

Finally, the presentation highlighted that the locations for active participation in human rights are increasingly occurring in commercial spaces like Facebook or YouTube. This was illustrated with an iconic image from Egypt in early 2011 in which a group of men are photographed holding up a "Thank you Facebook" sign. An important issue to consider is that these social media sites set the parameters for participation and for freedom of expression which raises the question; 'how can these spaces allow for active participation in a meaningful way, sensitive to human rights?'

The speaker concluded with an overview of WITNESS' 'Cameras Everywhere' initiative which seeks to come up with ways to engage with new stakeholders in human rights, including technology companies/investors. This is because there is an emerging need to ensure that people turning to video for human rights can use it as effectively, safely and ethically as possible. This requires both new skills and tools for traditional human rights organizations and new citizen activists, but also increased responsible engagement by the facilitators of social media sites. Recommendations to technology providers from the upcoming Cameras Everywhere report[20] were shared, as well as how WITNESS is working on tools that everyday citizen-activists can use to better protect themselves while filming[21].

8 CONCLUSION

"Listen, listen, listen…"

Throughout the conference, delegates were exposed to and critically explored active participation in a wide variety of circumstances, contributing their experience and expertise as well as suggesting potential action points. Although participatory methodology was used to establish dilemma topics, it was further implemented during the conference when delegates were given the option to alter the agenda structure for the second day and did so.

Engaging with both practical and theoretical approaches, in conjunction with selecting a wide background of participants, the conference organizers sought to open up greater discursive space to encourage constructive debate. Representatives from smaller organizations from across the globe were supported in order to attend, enhancing discussions and leading to a greater number of suggestions for action.

Across the sessions a number of common 'best practice' themes arose: most notably, clear communication and the involvement of participants from the outset of a project to ensure legitimacy and a participant-led agenda. This is not to suggest that all the 'best practice' recommendations laid out in this report will be applicable, or that participation will be free from obstacles. Many members of the communities you might wish to engage with may not choose to be a part of the process for different reasons, including frustration about previous experiences of others speaking on their behalf. That being said, the groups of rights holders that were present stressed that as long as individuals have the necessary respect and support, both practically (in terms of financing) and ethically (in terms of psycho-social support), they are likely to actively participate. This means that in order to increase the likelihood of participatory engagement, human rights practitioners should actively seek to 'listen, listen, listen' as this recognizes that the rights holder lies at heart of any change.

ENDNOTES

1 The term human rights practitioner is a being used to denote a variety of roles including all human rights defenders, individuals who are lawyers, activists, campaigners, researchers or survivors working in/collaborating with organisations on human rights issues

2 For information on dilemma discussions please refer to Annex 1

3 For more information on how the agenda was developed please refer to "Annex 1", Active Participation in Human Rights Pre-Conference Paper.

4 For the full framework/definition please see "Annex 2", Working Framework for Understanding Participation in the Context of Human Rights Work.

5 Amnesty International, *Maze of Injustice: The failure to protect Indigenous woman from sexual violence*, 2007 (Index: AMR 51/035/2007) Available at: http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/035/2007

6 Edhamnesty, 2011. Short Video of the AHRE Africa Project / Amnesty International. [video online] Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0j-_A2yfAkc

7 Explain the possible worst case scenarios or the potential for a communication to be manipulated leading to harmful outcomes.

8 Especially in an era of uncontrolled digital communication.

9 These limits should be well understood by staff who recruit survivors.

10 Approval was seen as a challenge in that it can be a time consuming process as it requires a great deal of back and forth discussions before campaigning or fundraising materials can be completed.

11 The stories included here are adapted from transcripts. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the text reflects what was said during the session and the overall sentiment of the individual's presentation.

12 See: http://www.witness.org

13 See: http://www.witness.org/training/how-to-videos

14 See for example WITNESS-STAND Pledge on Camera campaign: http://hub.witness.org/STAND-SPOTLIGHT

15 See http://blog.witness.org/2011/07/ahmed-bayasi%E2%80%99s-story-citizen-video-authentication-in-syria-and-beyond/

16 See http://www.youtube.com/user/onlymehdi

17 See http://www.crowdvoice.org, http://www.storyful.com, http://www.storify.com

18 See http://hub.witness.org/en/blog/digital-media-and-irans-green-movement-look-back-cameran-ashraf

19 See http://blog.witness.org/2011/02/human-rights-video-privacy-and-visual-anonymity-in-the-facebook-age/

20 See http://www.witness.org/cameras-everywhere

21 Such as the Secure Smart Cam project, available at http://www.witness.org/cameras-everywhere/witness_labs

ANNEX 1:

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS PRE-CONFERENCE PAPER

INTRODUCTION

This conference on active participation in human rights seeks to bring together human rights practitioners to explore examples, possibilities and challenges of active participation within human rights research, advocacy and campaigning. Active participation provides exciting opportunities (for example, for increased ownership over rights-based outcomes) but also poses challenges (for instance, how should you respond if rights holder priorities contradict human rights principles, lie outside organizational capacity or conflict with your organization's priorities.) The conference examines what active participation means in the context of human rights research, advocacy and campaigning.

Throughout the development of the conference, those organizing the event felt it was important to put into practice participatory approaches as much as possible; this was achieved by allowing the application process to set the agenda. In summary, the process was not only meant to allow us to identify participants, but also to acquire information on what they wanted to discuss at the conference and achieve from it.

This method is not something we regard as limited to the beginnings of the process. We also recognize the importance of involving participants during the conference itself through the conference process evaluation. Therefore, in one sense, the goal has been to use the conference itself as a test or case study for participatory methodologies.

The purpose of this paper is to set a general baseline of understanding amongst the participants and share some of the early insights. It therefore provides a brief summary of the information gathered throughout the application-consultation process.

The paper consists of four main parts: the first is a brief description of the application process; the second is an overview of the themes that emerged through the submitted issues/dilemmas; the third is a summary of the desired outcomes that you suggested; and the fourth section is a reflection on the application process from the perspective of the conference organizers.

THE PROCESS

Applicants were invited to propose specific dilemmas accompanied by a corresponding case study from their own experience whilst utilizing participatory methodologies within human rights work. For example, issues around power dimensions in communities, community decision-making, planning and/or evaluation of participatory methodologies, institutional hurdles, etc.

The process of selecting applicants and dilemmas involved a number of stages. The applications were divided amongst those organizing the conference. Organizers individually made comments on the applications and graded aspects of the application (the statement of intention, suggested conference outputs and proposed dilemmas). Conference organizers then discussed themes that had arisen from the applications. The six most relevant themes were used as the basis for selecting the six dilemmas for the conference. Each conference organizer then made suggestions as to the strongest dilemmas falling under these themes. The final dilemmas were selected on the basis of the strength of the dilemma and case study and its applicability across different areas of human rights work.

In deciding which applicants to accept, two factors were key: the overall strength of the application and the ability to fund the application. Secondary was a desire for a range of applicants reflecting a regional spread, gender mix and range of fields/areas of work.

PART ONE – EMERGING THEMES

The dilemmas put forward in using participatory tools and/or putting into practice participatory methodologies covered a wide range of themes, from individual experiences to institutional challenges; from issues of one's own participation to one's experience of facilitating the empowerment of others. The conference organizers would like to thank every applicant who shared a personal story of participation and in particular for the honesty that applicants showed in sharing the challenges that they have faced. This spirit of openness and learning from mistakes will enrich the conference for all who attend and participate.

Although some dilemmas fell outside the themes described below, these represent the majority of the applications submitted. The first four are themes that will likely be discussed in more detail at the conference. These four were chosen either because they represented a large proportion of the dilemmas submitted or because it was necessary to include them to ensure an adequate representation (or spread) of issues.

1. Survivor voice: This theme looks at representation of people in the campaigning and funding activities of human rights organizations. Specifically, it explores how survivors' voices and needs can be balanced against the demands of campaigning.

2. Power dynamics: This theme looks at power dynamics in formally structured systems of governance; and informally in different situations, such as community and/or family power dynamics.

3. Internal organizational governance: This theme looks at the challenges of balancing the primary needs of affected people and organizational needs. For example, in organizational planning, are people outside organizational staff really engaged in setting organizational priorities?

4. Human rights education and empowerment: This theme looks at whether active participation can lead to empowerment and if so in what circumstances. This discussion will be facilitated through the lens of Human Rights Education.

FURTHER DILEMMA THEMES

5. Monitoring and impact evaluation: This theme questions how we know that active participation actually works and to what end. It examines what we need to do to better evaluate projects using participatory methodologies and how to use participatory monitoring and evaluation tools.

6. Challenges in working with communities: This theme relates to the complexity of identities and experiences. Even if we agree that active participation should involve a community, which individuals within the community should be included? Should we prioritize certain aspects of identity over others?

7. Reconciling community needs with organizational needs: This theme is focused on the realities of how organizations set priorities for their work and whether/how that addresses what the engaged communities are looking for. It also looks at whether it is always appropriate to use participatory methodologies or whether doing so can sometimes clash with the desires of the affected people.

8. Active participation in a non-supportive environment: This theme is focused on the challenges of participation in unstable or authoritarian political regimes and/or where access to the communities is controlled by various power structures.

9. Risk: This theme looks at the risks associated with the use of participatory methodologies. The risks can be to the rights holders but also to the people and organizations that are carrying out the research or campaigning activities.

10. Youth: This theme focuses on capacity-building efforts that would allow young people to participate and/or to address issues of their access to community/family decision-making structures directly.

11. Bridging the gap between participation and real policy change: This theme explores how to use information gathered in a participatory way in order to bring about real change for those people affected. It also looks at how to manage expectations of people involved.

12. Participating in democratic/political processes: This theme addresses the macro challenge of supporting the participation of citizens in the political processes that affect their lives.

13. Who is participating?: This theme relates to the power theme and the monitoring, impact and evaluation theme in that it is sometimes a challenge to look at who is participating and, importantly, who is not participating and how to address under or misrepresentation.

14. Making rights real: This theme looks to how participatory methodologies can ensure rights are, and appear, meaningful to people's lives.

PART TWO – SUGGESTED OUTCOMES

Applicants have submitted thoughtful and creative suggestions for conference outcomes. The overarching message that came through this part of the application procedure was that applicants want practical guidance, tools and tips on how to use participatory methodology rather than theoretical ideas or approaches. Although this, in part, emanated from the fact that many applications where from practitioners rather than academics – even the applications from academics placed emphasis on the need for practical/applied outputs over theoretical and potentially abstract discussions. Therefore, the agenda was devised in an attempt to deliver practical guidance and tools. In addition to the requirement that outputs be practical, the more specific suggestions for outcomes are detailed below.

While there will certainly be a conference report, the conference agenda will also be created in a way to attempt to deliver practical guidance and tools. Further, while recognizing the constraints of developing outcomes without pre-conference preparations, the organizers will also attempt to leave as much space as possible during the conference for participants to discuss, define or develop their plan for further, post-conference outcomes.

A number of applicants stressed the need for documents compiling examples of good practice, in using active participation within human rights work. Some specific suggestions included:

- A code of ethics to guide the incorporation of active participation within human rights work and/or specifically guide engagement with 'personal histories'.

- Guidelines on key principles of a rights-based approach to research, specifically how to conduct and adapt research in response to active participation.

- Guidelines on how organizational structures can be participatory.

- Guidelines on how to incorporate active participation within advocacy and campaigning.

- Guidelines on how to respond to a range of dilemmas associated with working within a participatory framework.

- Guidelines on how to balance ethics, protection of personal data and stories, empowerment and advocacy.

- Guidelines on the specific applicability of implementing active participation within the Roma community, with religious minorities, within conflict and post-conflict contexts, with women and with children.

- The development of a checklist for using participatory methodologies, including perhaps the development of indicators of success.

- Guidelines on participatory evaluation tools.

Applicants also gave numerous suggestions for continued sharing of information at the conference. Some specific suggestions included:

- The production of journal articles was suggested by many applicants – suggestions were for individual articles and a 'special edition' on 'active participation' within an appropriate journal. The need to further conceptualize active participation, within different areas of human rights work, was specifically mentioned. Some applicants suggested a report on what 'survivors' can bring to campaigning.

- A number of applicants also suggested the circulation of a newsletter or some sort of semi-permanent communication tool.

- Some applicants suggested a conference report that included a summary of all sessions/workshops, while one applicant suggested that some key sessions are filmed so that they can be shared with those who were not able to attend the conference.

- One applicant suggested that each attendee produce an action plan on how they will integrate/develop the conference discussions.

There were also many suggestions for facilitating networks and continuing the discussion of issues of participation in human rights work. Some specific suggestions included:

- Many applicants emphasized they would like further conferences. The emphasis was on the need for further conferences or meetings at local, national and regional levels to address specific country cases and issue-specific needs.

- Some applicants requested the development of workshops on active participation based around different themes or alternatively, the development of a framework for a training programme on active participation.

- Many applicants emphasized the advantages of an online community that enables Amnesty International staff, partners, human rights practitioners and academics to exchange resources and debate active participation dilemmas; specifically, an online discussion group and website to act as a 'hub'.

- One applicant mentioned they would like to see a follow-up committee while another suggested that working groups be established to take forward discussions on specific issues.

- If agreed upon by conference participants, one applicant suggested the distribution of the name/contacts of participations among conference attendees to facilitate networking and partnerships.

In addition to the above suggestions, one applicant flagged they were keen for a certificate of attendance, and others suggested producing a declaration of the things that were decided at the conference.

PART THREE – REFLECTIONS BY THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS

In reviewing and selecting applicants/dilemmas two particular challenges surfaced

repeatedly. The first was how to balance diversity in relation to the individual. We tried to balance prioritizing the strongest applications with achieving a regional spread. Organizers ultimately questioned whether a western bias in their understanding of 'strong' applications also impacted their thinking. For example, the assessment of strong applications relied on a high standard of written communication in English, but many of the applications, particularly those from the global South, were written in the applicant's second language.

This challenge was also reflected in the interest in dilemmas of 'wider applicability'. The desire for dilemmas to be relevant to a range of applicants meant selecting the final dilemmas from prioritized themes that arose from the applications. However, this means dilemmas were excluded not based on their weaknesses, but because their focus was outside the set prioritized themes. Although we tried to ensure that minority rights issues were represented, there is a risk that this process excluded less 'popular' issues/concerns. To make matters more complex, different regions' dilemmas also seemed to group around different themes. For instance, the interest in the internal governance of NGOs tended to come from academics/practitioners from the global North.

Another key facet of the tension between theory and practice was the ideal of ensuring a diversity of participants, for example through the process of advertising the conference through the use of networks and due to the limitation in available funds. The organizers looked for obvious gaps in the applications we received (we had a distinct lack of applications from those working on HIV/AIDS) and then sent application forms in a more targeted way. However, our reliance on certain networks clearly shaped the pool of applicants.

The majority of applicants also requested funding, but funding constraints limited the ability to support many of these applications. The majority of applicants requiring funding came from the global South, making this a significant factor in the diversity of participants. Another issue to note with ensuring diversity is the limited information available, principally gender, nationality and first language. Given the complexity of identity politics and life experiences, what aspects should be prioritized to promote diversity and participation of less advantaged groups?

The second challenge that ran throughout the process was how to reconcile theory and practice. The conference organizers set the parameters for the conference before sending out the applications by focusing on active participation in human rights work. Our evaluation of the strength of applications and dilemmas was shaped by how well they fit within our conception of active participation. As one example, many of the applications had a very broad understanding of active participation, in terms of interest in democratic processes/politics. These applications were often deemed not strong as they fell beyond the parameters of what the conference seeks to explore. This invites the question of whether the conference would need to include participants in establishing the initial parameters for the project to meet the requirements for active participation.

Many of the challenges of active participation in practice have been evident within the organization of the conference itself. As an approach it is invariably imperfectly applied, and itself may throw up dilemmas rather than neat solutions. Going forward, lessons learned from the challenges that emerged during the application process will be incorporated into future

processes. There will be time to feed into the evaluation of the application process and the conference at the event itself, but the organizers would also be happy to receive any further suggestions or hear from applicants about their experience of the application process.

ANNEX 2:

WORKING FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS WORK AND THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION CONFERENCE[1]

PARTICIPATION

Action through which stakeholders are **part of** the processes and/or decisions made. The term can be used to refer to all action through which stakeholders are **part of** the processes and/or decisions made – from **informing** to full **stakeholder control**.

Active participation: Only refers to forms of participation which grant stakeholders influence over the processes and/or decisions made within human rights work.

There is considered to be a threshold for active participation. Active participation includes forms of participation that can be classified as, or are closer to full stakeholder control than, legitimate consultation.

Non-active participation: Refers to forms of participation which inform or involve stakeholders but do not enable stakeholders to have influence over the processes and/or decisions made within human rights work.

POINT TO NOTE

It is suggested that in many circumstances active participation can be an empowering and enabling process through which rights holders participate in and influence the processes and decisions which affect their lives in order to gain recognition and attainment of their human rights. However, this is not intended in any way to underestimate the value of working with non-active participation in circumstances where active participation is either not possible or is not appropriate.

[1] This framework is intended only as a guide to be used during the 'Active participation in human rights' conference.

Participant: Refers to a stakeholder who is in some way part of the processes and/or decisions made within human rights work.

Active participant: Refers to a stakeholder who is directly involved in influencing the processes and/or decisions made within human rights work.

Non-active participant: Refers to a stakeholder who is informed of, or involved in, the processes and/or decisions made within human rights work. However, the stakeholder is not given the means to directly influence the processes and/or decisions made.

Facilitator: A person (individual or group) responsible for overseeing and enabling the use of participation.

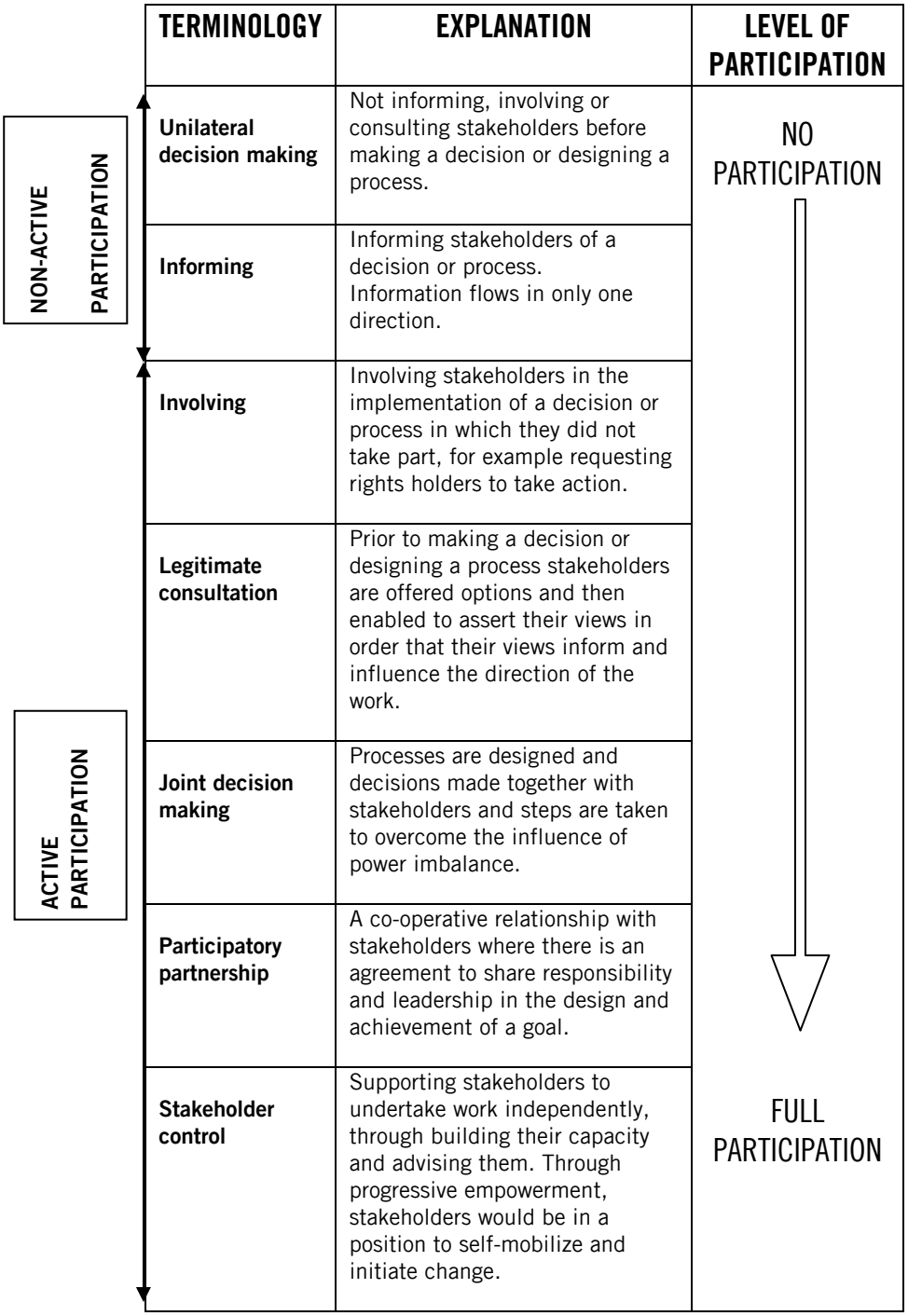
Rights Holder: People (individuals and groups) whose human rights have been, or are at risk of being, violated.

Stakeholder: Any person (individual or group) who has an interest in the processes and/or decisions made within human rights work. This is inclusive of, but not limited to, rights holders. Examples may include human rights practitioners or NGO members.

A CAVEAT

The definition of stakeholder is broad. On one hand this enables a discussion of participation in a range of settings (for example within the internal structures of NGOs, in the planning of this conference). Conversely, the term does not exclude those in positions of relative power/authority. Therefore, wherever possible, please be specific about the persons (individuals or groups) you are referring to.

Please see next page for table on levels and forms of participation.



TERMINOLOGY	EXPLANATION	LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION
Unilateral decision making	Not informing, involving or consulting stakeholders before making a decision or designing a process.	
Informing	Informing stakeholders of a decision or process. Information flows in only one direction.	
Involving	Involving stakeholders in the implementation of a decision or process in which they did not take part, for example requesting rights holders to take action.	
Legitimate consultation	Prior to making a decision or designing a process stakeholders are offered options and then enabled to assert their views in order that their views inform and influence the direction of the work.	
Joint decision making	Processes are designed and decisions made together with stakeholders and steps are taken to overcome the influence of power imbalance.	
Participatory partnership	A co-operative relationship with stakeholders where there is an agreement to share responsibility and leadership in the design and achievement of a goal.	
Stakeholder control	Supporting stakeholders to undertake work independently, through building their capacity and advising them. Through progressive empowerment, stakeholders would be in a position to self-mobilize and initiate change.	

Table 1: Terminology that indicates different levels and forms of participation

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS
CONFERENCE, 4 – 5 JUNE 2011

In June 2011, Amnesty International, Freedom from Torture and the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York, UK, held an 'Active participation in human rights' conference, attended by human rights practitioners from around the world.

The conference provided a forum for participants to explore the possibilities and challenges of active participation within human rights research, advocacy and campaigning, and served as a space to develop ideas and share best practice suggestions.

This report gives an overview of the sessions, discussions and suggestions of best practice that emerged from the event. The ideas presented are intended to be helpful and thought-provoking aids to integrating participatory approaches in human rights work.

The report's recommendations can be adapted to suit a variety of situations and so reflect the essence of active participation: an empowering and enabling process in which rights holders can participate and influence outcomes.

amnesty.org
york.ac.uk/inst/cahr
freedomfromtorture.org

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THE UNIVERSITY of York

Freedom from Torture
Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL