

Support Manuals

Human Right Observatories Network¹

The **Support Manuals** compose the basic orientation material for the implementation of the Human Rights Observatories Network. They present the mission statement and guidelines that form the foundation of the project and seek to sistematize the methodology of the work in its various stages, thus facilitating its implementation in different settings.

The **First Book** contains a summary of the formal text of the Human Rights Observatory Network, its history and main stages. This summary also explains the goals of the project and provides guidelines for the formation of the Local Working Group (LWG).

The **Second Book** is intended to be read and discussed by everyone involved in the project, (especially the young observers) and seeks to establish the fundamentals that should permeate the research process on all levels. The texts that compose this Notebook are meant to establish a common notion on the day-to-day proceedings and workings of the project, and also offer some guidelines for the interview process.

The **Third Book** is directed exclusively to coordinators and monitors of the project. It sheds light on the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team, on the kind of information that is to be researched and on the form and content of the Citizens' Report write-up. Furthermore, this Notebook provides answers to nineteen questions that may arise in the course of the work..

Finally, the **Fourth Book** organizes and describes the various activities and stages of the project, indicating a common thread that all groups involved should follow in the process of observation. The activities are organized in cronological order, alternating between general meetings (involving all groups in the city) and monitor meetings (with each group working separately).

All activities were planned in order to allow a gradative elaboration of the Citizen's Report and the exchange of information between the main participants of the project. The guidelines concentrate on the main activities and in the establishment of a common development

¹ Extracted and Edited by Marcelo Daher from Rede Observatórios de Direitos Humanos. 2002. *Cadernos de Apoio*. São Paulo: NEV/USP, 2002. Translation by Thomas Abreu.

process for all the LWGs. From this starting point, the project may be adjusted according to particular needs and objectives of different Networks.

Our challenge is to build a new conception of Human Rights from everyday experiences – a conception that deepens our knowledge about the context in which the young participants and any one else may experience. We expect this material to serve as a base of a fruitful dialog between all involved in this challenge.

First Book

General Schedule of Activities

Selecting members and forming the teams (1st month)

In each city, the participating organization responsible for the Local Working Group and the Network Coordination selects community associations, a monitoring team, and young observers connected to these associations. The composition of these teams should follow the criteria used in the implementation of the pilot project.

Training of the young observers (1st to 7th months)

The young observers are trained and educated both in human rights and in research techniques for the duration of the project. In the first three months of the project, this education is more intense and involves all the participating members of the LWGs. The methodology of research is developed according to the orientation of the Network Coordination and the consulting guidelines set by the Center for the Studies of Violence (Núcleo de Estudos da Violência – NEV/USP). The young observers are encouraged to interact with each other in order to define the axis of observation in each group.

Integration of the Network (1st to 7th month)

In order to integrate the LWGs, each group elaborates bulletins containing the main information and activities developed in each phase of their work. These texts will be the base of the Citizens' Report. The texts should be sent to the Network Coordination, who in turn will redistribute them between the Local Working Groups so that the youth themselves can read and comment on the work of their peers. In addition, the Network Coordination should promote an exchange of information and experiences between the participating organizations in the form of letters and personal contact.

Observation and Research (2nd to 6th month)

After common work references have been established, each group gathers qualitative information about the communities. The observations focus on the description of human rights violations and on the evaluation of the impact of public policy on the local communities. All the research work is accompanied by the monitor, who provides additional information and know-how for its realization. The Network Coordinator follows the work of the LWGs and develops parallel research in order to provide the groups with the relevant information from the related literature.

Write-up and publication of the Citizen's Report and magazine (6th month)

At the end of the observation phase, the groups meet and participate in week-long workshops for the elaboration of a youth-oriented magazine. All the material gathered and commented by the Network participants is re-written in preparation of the Citizens' Report. The Network Coordination defines the outlines of the Report and is responsible for the final revision. Each Local Working Group is responsible for the elaboration of a chapter of the Report, presenting its work.

Publishing and distributing the experience (7th month)

Both the magazine and the Citizens' Report should be intensely distributed by the participating observers. The distribution should reach youth groups in the affected communities, associations that deal with the researched themes, the media and members of the government. A meeting is organized in one of the cities where the Network is active for the national launching of the magazine and the Report. At least one representative of each LWG and Local Observers should be invited to participate and demonstrate their work.

First Book

Composition of the Local Working Group

Each Observatory is implemented by a Local Working Group (LWG), based on a partnership between the Network Coordination and an organization that acts in the Human Rights area. The latter may be either a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) or a Research Center. The Network Coordination supervises the LWGs, offering methodological orientation and parameters for the evaluating of the activities.

One coordinator and two or more assistants should manage the LWGs, depending on number of active research groups.

The LWGs are responsible for selecting the community associations and the groups of young observers, for creating the monitoring teams and for checking up on the development of the observations. Each LWG should contribute for the expansion of the Network, locating and contacting interested groups.

The LWG participates in the write-up of a news magazine for teenagers under the supervision of a specialized team and composes a chapter of the Citizen's Report, highlighting the work of its various young observers.

The groups of Local Observers are accompanied by a Monitor that coordinates the activities of the group. The groups are trained and educated on the topics of Human Rights and research methods. The Observers, under the guidance of the monitor, research and register qualitative information about the human rights situation in their communities. During the observation process, they discuss and exchange experiences with the other youth groups and associations active in the community.

At the conclusion of the observation phase, the youth-directed magazine and the Citizen's Report are written. Both publications benefit from broad participation by the young observers and are published and distributed by them in their communities and to the public-at-large.

Third Book

Guidelines for the Coordination Team

The local coordination and monitoring team is composed by the coordinator, assistant coordinator, and monitors, and is responsible for the supervision of the observers in the local sphere. In this work, the supervision is formed by the roles of “**research director**” and “**developer**” of the observing group.

Since the development of the young observers and the formation of the Observatories are at heart one and the same, every research and discussion activity in the formulation of the Report is also a way to further train and sharpen the group and its capabilities. Throughout the process, these two functions are completely connected.

As **research directors**, the orientating team coordinates the work of the young observers so as to facilitate and guarantee the collection of relevant information and the proper registering and cataloguing of the data for the formulation of the Citizens’ Report. In order to accomplish this, the team structures and follows an activity plan, always making clear the fact that the goal of the gathering of information is neither to arrive at a quick diagnosis of the facts observed nor to come to conclusions that reinforce value judgments.

In their role as **developers** of the working groups, the coordinating team must strengthen and develop the observing, registering and communication abilities of the young observers. In order to accomplish this goal, the team must involve the whole group in the activities, stimulating the participation of each observer, explaining any doubts or questions, and stimulating self-evaluation. The elaboration and presentation of the work should be developed in distinct ways in order to advance and refine the communication of that which was observed.

In order to harmonize the developing and directing roles, the coordination teams must realize that the young observers will progressively understand more and more about both the method of work and the subject researched as they conduct the observatory process. The Observatories Network coordination establishes and evaluates parameters and results of the work from this understanding and from the systematic supervision of the work progress in the different LWGs.

The Role of the Coordinator

The coordinating team supervises all the activities of the Local Working Groups directly and indirectly. It acts as an intermediary between the Network Coordination and the Local Working Groups, informing the former about the progress and status of the work and the latter about indications and instructions from the Network Coordination.

In order to guarantee the compliance of the LWG with the parameters established by the Network, the coordinating team supervises the LWG directly through **weekly general meetings** with **all the participants in the project** in each locality, and indirectly through **weekly meetings with the monitors** of the observing groups. In the weekly general meetings and in the monitor meetings, the coordinating team verifies that the process of orienting the research and training of the observers is fulfilling its stated goals.

The Role of the Monitor

Each monitor is responsible for the supervision of the a group of five young observers. This supervision role combines the role of **research director** in the local sphere with that of **developer** of the observers group.

In order to harmonize the developing and directing roles, the monitor must realize that the young observers will progressively understand more and more about both the method of work and the subject researched as they conduct the observatory process. The monitor must observe the characteristics and participation of each observer in the group, noticing how different themes and activities reflect her or his involvement in the process of work, harmonizing the needs of the group and the necessities of the project itself.

The Role of the Young Observer

As the title of the project indicates, the young observer is the central agent, the protagonist of the project. The Observatories Network seeks to develop and present the perception of human rights in the community from the point of view of this young observer. The role of these individuals develops from the actual practice of observation, be it by encouraging self-evaluation and analysis of their own life experiences in the day-to-day of these localities, or through the collection of testimonies which give a human perspective to the local problem and to the rights in question.

This, however, does not mean that the work process is developed according to the wishes of the young observers. The role of protagonist of the observer is promoted and guaranteed in the activities and stages of observation which, while providing information and

presenting their local perception of human rights, simultaneously shape and educate the observers, giving them analytical tools and enriching their work, observation and registering capabilities.

The young observers should actively participate in all General Meetings, where they receive guidelines and indications for their work and participate in discussions about the process of work and the theme observed. In the local work environment, each group should have its own space where it can keep their material and meet with its monitor at least twice a week, thus establishing a work routine.

It is fundamental that the young observers participate actively in all phases of the project and that their voices be heard. Each observer not only implements the activities but also evaluates them with his or her monitor. The group must be encouraged to suggest new activities and propose questions throughout the work.

Like the monitors and coordinators, the young observers are part of the project team that composes the Local Working Group. As such, they assume responsibilities and goals of the work assigned to this unit. Nonetheless, they retain the central role in this process.

Fourth Book

Activities Guideline

The spreadsheet below is a summary of the activities developed by all the groups in the Network, described in detail on the fourth book of the Support Manual. The spreadsheet offers a general idea of the distribution of the activities in the course of the seven months of work, emphasizing the deadlines that must be met and materials that must be sent to the Network Coordination.

Human Rights Observatories Network – Activities Spreadsheet			
PHASE	OBJECTIVES	ESTIMATED DURATION	MATERIAL SENT TO THE NETWORK COORDINATION
1- Establishing the project and its methods	Introduce and establish the project and its methods to the group	1 Week	Define the associations in which each monitor will work, the forms of contact with the observers and the Network, and establish a schedule of meetings.
2- Creating a Common Reference for the Observations	Create common references about the observations and about the work of the Human Rights Observatories Network	1 Week	Texts composed by the young observers: <i>What are the main activities of this project</i> and <i>Why will we be observers?</i>
3- First Observation Phase: <i>Personal Life Stories and the History of the Community</i>	Begin the collection of material for the Citizens' Report and the creation of the Network between the young observers.	5 Weeks	Personal Letter about the Life Story of the Observer Collective Letter about the History of the Community Other testimonies about the life in the communities Map of the observed community
4- Creating a Common Reference about Human Rights	Familiarize the group with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Analyze the 6 thematic axis of the study; Approximate the meaning of Human Rights to the day-to-day experience of the community.	2 Weeks	_____
5- Second Observation Phase: <i>Gathering Information about the Chosen Theme and Analyzing Case Studies</i>	Getting to know the 6 themes involved in the study and gather information about relevant cases.	2 Weeks	Personal testimonies related to the six themes observed and discussed: Violence, Discrimination, Health, Education, Culture and Leisure, and Work.
6- Defining the Specific Theme of the Observation	Define the theme that will be researched by each of the groups	1 Week	List of the chosen themes by each group and the indications of the monitors and coordinators.
7- Third Observation Phase: Getting to	Describe spaces and institutions	4 Weeks	All work produced in Phase 7, such as interviews, pictures,

Know the Spaces, Institutions, and Individuals Involved.	related to the chosen theme and conduct interviews with the individuals involved in them.		testimonies, etc.
8- Fourth Observation Phase: <i>Researching Other Cases in the Community</i>	Gathering of information about cases and episodes in the community related to the observed theme	4 Weeks	All work produced on Phase 8, especially interviews and testimonies.
9- Composition of the Citizens' Report	Edit the texts that compose the Citizens' Report	4 Weeks	Synthesis of the texts from phases 3, 5, 7 e 8
10- Communication Workshops	Develop communication abilities; prepare journalistic material for the young public.	2 Weeks (non-consecutive)	Texts, photographs and illustrations for the informative magazine.
11- Publishing and Presentation	Publishing and presentation of the results of the project to the authorities, communities and the public	2 Weeks	_____