

Inputs for OHCHR Study on UPR Good Practices

Joint contribution by:

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Over the years there has been a growing consensus that the main challenge for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism is to ensure the monitoring and implementation of recommendations at local level.

This coalition of NGOs fully agrees that this should be the priority for the next UPR cycle and that further efforts should be deployed to this end.

This short document highlights the issues that most deserve to be addressed in preparation for the 4th cycle, bringing forward, where possible, concrete proposals based on the experience gained in several years of working with this mechanism.

This contribution is complementary to other possible individual contributions submitted by co-signing NGOs.

KEY SUGGESTION POINTS

In order to strengthen the UPR process and especially the implementation of UPR recommendations, the following key points should be taken into consideration:

Accessibility of UPR Recommendations at the Local Level

Widespread dissemination of recommendations among local civil society actors and the public in general is still lacking.

In this regard, we point out that the involvement of the press and the media in the dissemination of information about the UPR mechanism is still too limited. Further efforts must be made to strengthen the role of communication experts in raising awareness of the UPR and the human rights issues that the UPR raises.

Beyond the mere dissemination, it has been noted that the language in which the recommendations are framed is not always easily accessible for non-experts in the human rights field. This challenge is partially linked to the wording of the recommendations by international actors that could certainly be improved as well as to the inherent conditions of varied local dialects/languages. However, we remain convinced that even recommendations formulated in a more SMART way and then translated into local languages would only partially address the issue. Based on several workshops run with human rights defenders from different regions, it has been observed how UPR recommendations lend themselves to different interpretations depending on the local actors concerned. Moreover, some recommendations require prior knowledge of certain international mechanisms and bodies (e.g. those calling for renewal of Special Procedures mandates or standing invitations to them, those recommending timely submission of State reports to Treaty Bodies).

As a result, the knowledge and understanding of potential implications of UPR recommendations risk to remain the prerogative of a few advocacy professionals within the Government and the Civil Society.

Strengthening Awareness Raising and Capacity Building for Local Actors

In order to generate good practices to boost a better implementation, there is a need to reach out to and empower not only advocacy professionals, but all those who are directly dealing with human rights challenges and providing relating services (education, assistance to victims etc) in the country. In order for them to fully assume their role as monitoring actors at the national level, they have to see the link between the implementation of UPR recommendations and the human rights-related work they are already carrying out.

As a result, targeted capacity building initiatives are needed to widen the pool of actors reached and ensure that human rights monitoring and implementation become a prerogative of civil society as whole. Therefore, further support from OHCHR and other UN personnel at the local level is needed to support and further develop NGO capacity building efforts.

On the same line, another obstacle is the encounter of state-actors and duty bearers (government personnel) who do not know of the UPR Process and the recommendations. This presents a serious difficulty for well-informed and trained local civil society actors when they reach out to their own national authorities or to representatives of other States in their country. For instance, the impact of advocacy actions carried out domestically is limited by the fact that personnel in the Embassies is often not aware of the UPR process nor have a clear understanding of how the information provided by the local NGOs could be reported to their Permanent Missions in Geneva.

National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow Up (NMRFs)

In order to gain more in the promotion and protection of human rights on the ground, there is a need to establish **National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow Up (NMRFs)**. In the past two years, the cosigning NGOs has repeatedly issued joint statements during the Human Rights Council (under Item 6 -General Debate or under other relevant items). These statements called upon all Member States to set up or strengthen NMRFs in order to enhance implementation efforts of relevant government institutions in consultation with Civil Society. Despite some positive results, much remains to be done to make this mechanism a widespread and effective practice.