

Human Rights Defenders Protection Plan

FORUM-ASIA's Protection Plan for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) at risk was developed as a result of the 3rd Asian Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum held in Bangkok in January 2009. The Protection Plan aims to further strengthen protection and provide timely and efficient assistance to HRDs at risk in Asia, through temporary relocation and other types of urgent assistance as well as trial observation missions. It must be stressed that the assistance under the Protection Plan is temporary in nature.

1. Who can apply?

According to the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, a **human rights defender** is any person who promotes and strives for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. **Women human rights defenders**, as defined by the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC), are "women active in human rights defense who are targeted for who they are as well as those active in the defense of women's rights who are targeted for what they do".

The HRD applying for assistance shall be from one of the member/partner organisations of FORUM-ASIA or works on human rights issues together with FORUM-ASIA's members/partners organisations in Asia. His/her case should be vouched and endorsed by a FORUM-ASIA member/partner organisation. The HRD receiving the assistance must work to promote and protect human rights, believe in the principle of universality of human rights and work in a non-violent manner.

2. What types of assistance can be provided?

2.1 *Temporary Relocation Support*

This type of assistance is provided to HRDs who are facing immediate and extreme threats to their life as a result of their work as HRDs and there is a need to be relocated temporarily to a safer place. The HRD applying for this grant should have exhausted all remedies and protection measures available prior to the relocation. The assistance can only support the HRD at risk up to 6 months within a member/partner organisation of FORUM-ASIA. Assistance available shall be up to US\$4,000 only per approved application.

2.2 *Other types of urgent assistance*

This type of assistance is provided to HRDs who are in need of urgent support due to immediate and extreme threats as a result of their work as HRDs and can include, among others, immediate medical support fees for HRDs who have been attacked or who have suffered an acute medical condition as a direct result of their peaceful human rights activities. This type of assistance is provided to HRDs on a case-by-case basis. Assistance available shall be up to US\$4,000 only per approved application.

2.3 Trial observation

This type of assistance is provided to HRDs who have been charged with a legal case by state or non-state actors as a form of threat or harassment resulting of their human rights activities. The aim of the trial observation is to ensure that the HRD receives a fair trial. This type of assistance shall be in the form of costs for trials observer teams to be present during the trial of the HRD. Assistance available shall be up to US\$3,000 only per approved application.

2.4 The Protection Plan does not provide assistance for

- Retrospective funding
- HRDs who have applied or are already receiving funding for the same purpose elsewhere
- Purchase of materials

3. How are applications processed?

The HRD applying for assistance should be endorsed by one of FORUM-ASIA's member/partner organisations. A request for assistance and an information sheet shall be submitted to FORUM-ASIA. All information submitted to support the applications shall be kept confidential by FORUM-ASIA. The application must be made in English. The following information must be submitted to FORUM-ASIA:

- Information about the HRD: contact details, activities in advancing human rights, the group/organisation the HRD belongs to, relation to FORUM-ASIA's member/partner organisations
- Details of the threat the HRD is facing
- Expected results from the protection that FORUM-ASIA will provide

The person applying must stipulate clearly which other requests for assistance have been made to other organisations, as well as the responses of these organisations to said requests. Applications will be evaluated by the HRD Programme based on the criteria outlined below.

3.1 Criteria

Temporary Relocation Support

- Urgency of situation and the gravity of the need
- The request is directly related to the human rights activities of the HRD
- All remedies and protection measures available prior to the relocation have been exhausted
- Limited response capacity within the organisation to support HRDs at risk

Other Types of Urgent Assistance

- Urgency of situation and the gravity of the need
- The request is directly related to the human rights activities of the HRD
- Limited response capacity within the organisation to support HRDs at risk
- This type of assistance is provided to HRDs on a case-by-case basis

Trial Observation

- Legal charges are filed against the HRD because of his/her work in promoting and protecting human rights

- The case has a potential for standards on human rights to be developed or where existing standards are under threat

4. How is assistance provided?

4.1 Temporary Relocation Support

The HRD whose application has been approved shall discuss arrangements together with the HRD Programme and the possible member/partner organisation to host him/her. Places for relocation for the HRD whose application has been approved will be explored by the HRD Programme, taking into consideration where FORUM-ASIA has member organisations, where the HRD can assimilate easily, and where he/she can easily enter or obtain a visa. The host member/partner organisation together with the HRD concerned and the HRD Programme will draft a work plan for the HRD during his/her stay with the member/partner organisation. The work plan will be framed according to the HRD's skills and knowledge as well as how he/she can enhance his/her capacity and understanding of human rights issues during his/her stay in the place of relocation. It shall consider the psycho-emotional stress the HRD might have been under. The type of work the host member/partner undertakes shall also be considered. The terms of reference (ToR) between the member/partner organisation, the HRD and FORUM-ASIA will be finalised and signed as soon as possible. The HRD Programme shall liaise with the member/partner organisation in securing accommodation for the HRD and arranging for the regular transfers of funds, etc. It should be noted that funds under this type of assistance shall only be for round-trip travel to and from the country/area of relocation (e.g. airfare, visa fees, etc.) and living expenses during the duration of stay.

4.2 Other types of urgent assistance

The HRD whose application has been approved shall discuss with the HRD Programme and the FORUM-ASIA member/partner organisation what type of urgent assistance is needed.

4.3 Trial observation

In the case where a trial observation mission is supported, a team of individual trial observers will be set up from the network of members and partners of FORUM-ASIA who possess the necessary expertise in monitoring cases involving human rights issues. In case a trial monitoring mission is supported, the trial observers shall submit a report to the HRD Programme within 15 days after the end of the observation mission.

5. Follow-up

HRDs receiving assistance under the Protection Plan are required to submit a short write-up of no more than 500 words. This feedback will be used to assess how the assistance helped HRDs at risk.

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact the HRD Programme of FORUM-ASIA:
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