OHCHR

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

1. Facts and figures

Type of organisation: Office of the UN Secretariat

Established in: 1993

Headquarters: Geneva, New York

Number of country offices: 13 regional offices and 12 country offices, in addition to a presence in 15 peace operations and 16 UN country teams

Head of organisation: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay (South Africa)
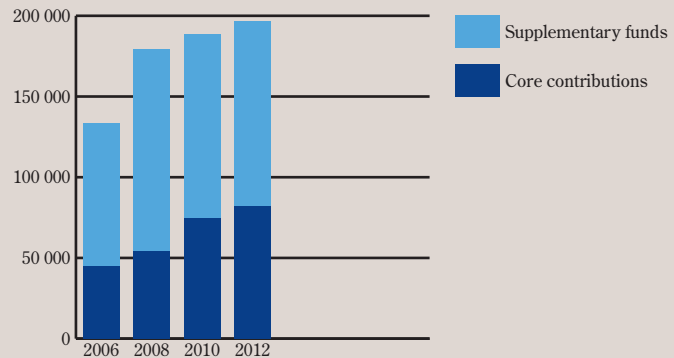
Date of Board meetings in 2013: OHCHR is part of the UN Secretariat and does not have its own Board. Donor country consultations: 26 April

Number of Norwegian staff: 5 permanent employees and 3 junior experts
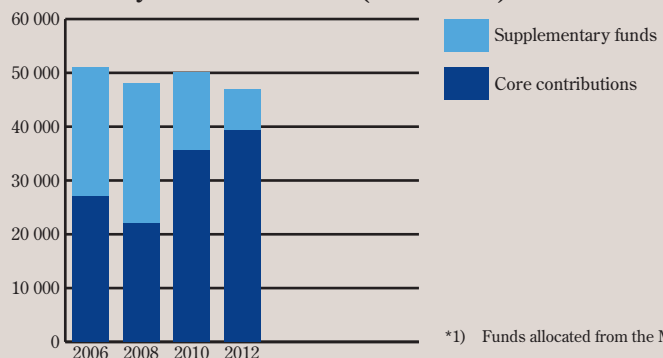
Competent ministry: Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
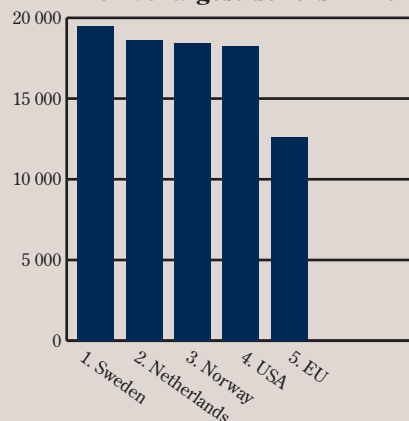
Website: www.ohchr.org

Total revenues (1000 USD)

Supplementary funds
Core contributions

Norway's contributions [1] (1000 NOK)

Supplementary funds
Core contributions

*1)   Funds allocated from the MFA's budget

The five largest donors in 2012 (1000 USD)

1. Sweden   2. Netherlands   3. Norway   4. USA   5. EU

Mandate and areas of activity

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was established by a UN General Assembly Resolution (res 48/141-1993) with the mandate of promoting and protecting human rights for all. OHCHR's mission is to focus attention on the human rights situation in the world and speak out clearly when human rights are violated. OHCHR also acts as an important international contact point for research and education, capacity-building and advocacy activities relating to human rights. The Office provides technical assistance to a number of UN Member States.

The High Commissioner is also the UN system's secretariat for the bodies established to monitor States Parties' implementation of international human rights treaties. The OHCHR is further tasked with supporting the work of Special Rapporteurs appointed to monitor human rights in different country situations or in relation to specific issues. Another important task is to ensure that human rights are mainstreamed and strengthened in all the activities of the UN system, including all funds and programmes.

The work of the OHCHR particularly targets three levels of activity: the normative development of human rights standards, monitoring of compliance with human rights norms and implementation of human rights instruments on the ground.

The OHCHR Management Plan 2012–2013 defines six thematic priorities:

1) Countering discrimination
2) Combating impunity and strengthening accountability, the rule of law and democratic society
3) Pursuing economic, social and cultural rights and combating inequalities and poverty
4) Protecting human rights in the context of migration
5) Protecting human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity
6) Strengthening international human rights mechanisms and the progressive development of international human rights law.

Results achieved in 2012

OHCHR has contributed to ensuring that more countries formulate their legislation in accordance with international human rights norms. Six states have implemented constitutional reforms that take account of international human rights standards. OHCHR has assisted four states in drafting legislation to prevent acts prohibited by the UN Convention against Torture. Moreover, OHCHR has participated in legislative processes in three countries resulting in reduced use of the death penalty. The Office has also assisted at least five states to prepare national plans of action to promote human rights.

Another result to which OHCHR's work has contributed is the growing number of ratifications of international human rights conventions. A total of 70 new ratifications were registered in 2012.

The number of states that have adopted regulatory frameworks which strengthen the rights of discriminated groups has increased. In 2012, at least 32 states received OHCHR assistance to adopt or implement laws and regulations that strengthen the rights of discriminated groups or their access to basic services. At least 14 states strengthened the participation of discriminated groups in decision-making processes and monitoring of national policy.

OHCHR has made a positive contribution to efforts to combat impunity for gross human rights violations by establishing national-level mechanisms to investigate human rights violations and to hold accountable those who have committed abuses. In at least seven countries, OHCHR has helped to provide training and raise awareness of how such mechanisms can be applied.

A growing number of states are cooperating with UN Special Rapporteurs. Special Rapporteurs undertook 80 country visits in 2012, and at least seven states took steps to follow up on their recommendations.

The work of OHCHR in Uganda

OHCHR established a country office in Uganda in 2005. Sexual minorities are particularly vulnerable in Uganda, and a bill prohibiting homosexuality and imposing a death penalty for repeated homosexual acts is currently under consideration in the Ugandan Parliament. The bill also criminalises the efforts of human rights defenders to promote the rights of homosexuals.

In a number of other areas as well, bills have been proposed that are in breach of international human rights standards and Uganda's international obligations. Against this background, OHCHR works in extremely difficult circumstances to promote respect for human rights. As a bright spot in this field, a bill on mental health was thoroughly revised based on proposals from OHCHR and Ugandan civil society.

2. Assessments: Results, effectiveness and monitoring

The organisation's results-related work

OHCHR has a results framework in the form of a two-year strategic plan, the OHCHR Management Plan. In 2013, planning was made a four-year process, so that the next plan covers the period 2014–2017. The Management Plan is prepared by OHCHR and is not the object of intergovernmental negotiations, but UN Member States are invited to submit proposals regarding the plan. This has to do with OHCHR's status as part of the UN Secretariat. Offices within the Secretariat structure do not have their own Boards. However, the Management Plan must lie within the scope of Programme 20 on human rights of the UN Secretary-General's Strategic Framework, which is approved by the UN General Assembly. OHCHR's Management Plan defines goals for planned activities. Each OHCHR department and unit draws up annual plans with its own goals based on the Management Plan.

OHCHR has reaped praise for having taken important steps to improve its monitoring of results, but it is still in the process of putting in place the results-based management system and there are units that have not yet fully implemented the system. There is also room for improvement in OHCHR's documentation of results at country level. In this connection, there are limits as to how much can be documented in terms of measurable results for an agency working to promote normative standards, often in an extremely sensitive political context.

Planning and budgeting systems

In the past few years, OHCHR has faced challenges arising from the fact that growth in mandates from the UN Human Rights Council, additional work in connection with country reviews (Universal Periodic Reviews) and in the treaty bodies, and increased demand for assistance in the field have not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in resources. A short-term solution to this problem was found by using reserves saved up from previous years. While OHCHR's management initially devoted little attention to this problem, its focus on the issue has now increased significantly. Budget cuts have been made and internal reform processes have been initiated. OHCHR has developed qualitative and quantitative measurement indicators to document the results of its work.

OHCHR prepares annual reports that present results at country and global level. The Office is able to document results and progress in a number of areas. However, OHCHR can improve its efforts to link the results reported more clearly to the outcomes originally formulated, and make more extensive use of baseline data in its results management work. OHCHR maintains that this will be done in its annual report for 2013, which will summarise the Office's performance in the two-year planning period (2012–2013).

Oversight and anti-corruption

In 2009, the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) carried out a management audit of the High Commissioner's fulfilment of her mandate, which resulted in the report *Efficiency of the Implementation of the Mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* (A/64/203). All the recommendations in the audit report were fully implemented by the end of 2011, contributing to a considerable increase in the agency's effectiveness.

OHCHR is subject to the UN Secretariat's control mechanisms. This means that OHCHR is subject to external audits by the UN Board of Auditors and internal reviews by the OIOS. The OIOS also carries out management audits and general evaluations. OIOS is part of the UN Secretariat, but is operationally independent and can initiate evaluations of its own accord. In addition, the UN General Assembly may request special evaluations. OIOS reports to the UN Secretary-General, who has formal responsibility for ensuring that OIOS recommendations are implemented.

OHCHR itself also initiates regular evaluations of its activities, as well as evaluations within specific thematic areas. These evaluations are financed by donor contributions and are carried out by external consultants. There was previously a need to improve procedures to ensure that the conclusions reached in these evaluations were applied systematically. Since it has been several years since the last external audit of OHCHR, it is difficult at this time to assess the Office's procedures for implementing recommendations. However, the follow-up of the management audit in 2009, which was carried out during the period 2009–2011, produced good results.

OHCHR is also subject to the UN Secretariat's guidelines for dealing with and preventing corruption, and for ensuring protection of whistle-blowers. OIOS has established a whistle-blowing channel that can be used for all types of reports of financial irregularities in the UN system, but the channel is not featured on OHCHR's own website and may therefore be difficult for potential whistle-blowers to access.

Institution-building and national ownership

The Office has helped to increase the visibility of and international focus on human rights issues. Most of the countries that have accepted OHCHR's presence consider that the Office fulfils a strategically important role. OHCHR is particularly actively engaged in efforts relating to national legislative processes in the fields of human rights and national capacity-building. A growing number of states now collaborate with the UN Special Rapporteurs; 90 states have issued a standing invitation to UN Special Rapporteurs, a significant increase from earlier years. The High Commissioner for Human Rights is also deemed to have made particularly valuable contributions to building the capacity of national human rights institu-

tions. Furthermore, OHCHR works closely with civil society in the countries in which it is represented.

As far as the mainstreaming of relevant cross-cutting issues is concerned, OHCHR is considered to cooperate well with other UN offices and UN agencies on promoting gender equality and a gender perspective. OHCHR's description of the gender perspective in its annual reports and activity reports is regarded as satisfactory. Poverty reduction is another important cross-cutting issue in OHCHR's activities. The High Commissioner recognises poverty as one of the underlying causes of the lack of adherence to human rights standards.

Willingness to learn and change

OHCHR has carried out several change processes to improve its effectiveness and sharpen its focus on results. Its willingness to learn seems to have improved significantly in the past few years, and a number of processes are currently in progress that will be concluded in 2013 and 2014.

International studies indicate that the organisation has moved in a positive direction. Examples are the British (2011) and the Swedish (2012) reviews of OHCHR, and the 2011 evaluation of the follow-up of the 2009 OIOS report, which points out that OHCHR has made important advances towards the implementation of results-based management.

3. Norway's policy towards OHCHR

OHCHR's mandate is concurrent with the strong emphasis Norway places on human rights in its foreign policy. OHCHR plays a decisive role in efforts to strengthen the international system for securing and protecting human rights. Both the role of the High Commissioner as secretariat for the treaty bodies and for the Special Rapporteurs and the OHCHR's provision of technical support to other parts of the UN system are regarded as important contributions to international efforts to ensure that human rights standards are observed at the local and national level.

The High Commissioner's thematic priorities largely coincide with Norway's priorities in the field of human rights. This applies to efforts to support human rights defenders, combat discrimination, secure the rights of sexual minorities, and ensure private-sector compliance with human rights standards.

Norway has actively supported the High Commissioner's independent mandate and has sought to ensure that her activities are not subordinated to the control of Member States. Norway has also supported OHCHR's efforts to strengthen its field presence. Moreover, Norway has provided support for OHCHR's efforts to improve its organisational capacity to respond to acute human rights situations.

One of Norway's focal areas recently has been to contribute actively to intensifying OHCHR's focus on the implementation of accepted recommendations from the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR). Norway also works systematically to underpin OHCHR's efforts to ensure that the human rights perspective is included in other UN activities, as well as in funds and programmes. Norway seeks to promote better monitoring and reporting of results in collaboration with other donors.

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