

IHRDA at the NGO Forum and the 56th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, April 2015

Overview

Prior to the Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) usually organises an international forum on the participation of NGOs (NGO Forum) in the Session. This year, the NGO Forum ran from 17 – 19 April 2015, prior to the 56th Ordinary Session of the ACHPR which began on 21 April 2015 in Banjul, The Gambia.

Usually, alongside the NGO Forum and the ACHPR Session, there are several other events conducted by organisations attending the Forum and the Session.

IHRDA was one of the organisations that actively participated in the forum and the public session of the Commission, and successfully organised a series of side-events.



Opening Ceremony of the NGO Forum



Opening Ceremony of the 56th Ordinary Session of the African Commission

IHRDA Activities

1. Participation in NGO Forum

- IHRDA registered five (5) staff who attended the forum and followed the deliberations.
- The Director of Programs for IHRDA, Mr Gaye Sowe, also chaired the panel discussion on the question of statelessness and the right to nationality in Africa.



Gaye Sowe (third from right) chairs the session on the right to nationality

2. Side Events

i. Litigants' Group Workshop, Meeting and Legal Clinic

- IHRDA (represented by its Legal Officer, Oludayo Fagbemi) was part of a panel of three (3) resource persons that organised a session to brief some lawyers and human rights activists from different countries on the communication procedures of the ACHPR. Oludayo equally took the opportunity to present IHRDA online case law analyser on the African human rights system to these actors.
- Also, IHRDA hosted a meeting of the Litigants' Group, wherein discussions centred on ways forward to revitalize and strengthen the activities of the group. A Steering Committee was created to that effect, with IHRDA Legal Officer, Oludayo Fagbemi, appointed chairperson.
- Oludayo of IHRDA was equally in a team of two (2) resource persons who represented the Litigants' Group in a legal clinic to offer pro bono counselling and orientation to some individuals with cases of violations.

It should be noted that the Litigants' Group is an informal coalition of organisations and lawyers who litigate before the ACHPR. The objective of the group is to strengthen networking and concerted efforts, information-sharing and capacity-building amongst litigants, and support the work of the ACHPR.

ii. Training of Sudanese Lawyers

IHRDA, with the support of the American Bar Association, organised a 3-day training workshop with about a dozen of lawyers from Sudan. The lawyers were given a general overview of the African human rights mechanisms (major instruments and treaty bodies); they were equally drilled in-depth on the communication procedures of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.



Legal Officer drills on communication procedures of the Africa Court on Human and Peoples' Rights



Legal Officer drills on communication procedures of the Africa Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights



Director of Programs gives overview of African human rights mechanisms

iii. Panel Discussion on the Human Rights Situation in Mauritania

IHRDA in partnership with three Mauritanian organizations conducted a panel discussion on the human rights situation in Mauritania. About 30 persons attended.



L to R: Mauritanian partner; IHRDA Executive Director, Legal Officer



Partial view of participants



Group photo of participants and IHRDA staff

iv. Launching of Study on the Right to Nationality

IHRDA, in partnership with the ACHPR, and with the support of Open Society Initiative, organised the launching of a study on the Right to Nationality in Africa.

v. Statement at the 56th Session of ACHPR

IHRDA was one of the civil society organisations to present a statement at the Session of the Commission. In the statement presented by Legal Officer Oludayo, IHRDA evoked the question of the assassination of Gilles Cistac, prolific lawyer, human rights activist and lecturer in Mozambique, and one-time Board member of IHRDA; IHRDA called on the African Commission to demand proper investigation and accountability by the Mozambican government on the killing.



Legal Officer, Oludayo, delivers statement

vi. Communication

The IHRDA Communication team was equally at work during these events, giving live reports and updates through social media; displaying IHRDA online resources (the case law analyser – caselaw.ihrda.org – and the SGBV database – sgbv.ihrda.org), and distributing flyers.



IHRDA Fellow & Volunteer at the stand displaying SGBV website



Communications Officer & Communications Intern at work

Others

IHRDA equally attended the 25th Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (that went on simultaneously with the Session of the ACHPR) from 21 – 24 April, 2015 at Addis Abeba, Ethiopia. In one of its closed sessions, the Committee considered a communication filed by IHRDA against Malawi.



IHRDA Publications and Communications Officer represented IHRDA at the 25th Session of ACERWC



Mozambican Delegation poses with ACERWC after presentation of country periodic report