HANDBOOK

on

HUMAN RIGHTS

DOCUMENTATION

அடையாளம்

கொள்கை ஆய்வுக்கான நிலையம்

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I - WHAT IS HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION?

Human Rights Documentation is a process for collecting information that involves assessing individual human rights violations and analyzing patterns and evolution of the human rights situation. This process includes determining what to document and how to document it, gathering and collecting the identified information, and processing and storing that information in a relevant form.[1]

Documentation is one component of Monitoring, Documenting and Reporting (MDR), which is the "systematic and active collection of data, analysis of such data and dissemination of such information on human rights violations for immediate use by concerned and interested parties."[2]

In some contexts, MDR occurs with all three components operating simultaneously, such as where a Civil Society Organization (CSO) gathers documentation to put into a particular human rights report to be disseminated immediately as part of a longer-term project monitoring the human rights situation in a country.

In other contexts, documentation and monitoring are done in anticipation of eventual reporting, but without knowledge of what form that reporting will take exactly. For example, in Syria, CSOs are currently documenting human rights violations in anticipation of eventual prosecutions, but still in advance and separate from reporting.

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[1] This definition is based on internationally acceptable definitions of documentation as cited in "Human Rights Documentation Toolkit", Public International Law and Policy Group (2016), accessed here: <http://www.hrdtoolkit.org/terminology/> ["*PILPG, 2016*"]; also found in "Human Rights Monitors' Guidebook", Search for Common Ground (2014), Nigeria, accessed here: < https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/HUMAN-RIGHTS-MONITORS%E2%80%99-GUIDE-BOOK_final_with-cover.pdf> ["*SCFG, 2014*"].

[2] *SFCG, 2014*

This handbook will focus on human rights documentation as part of the broader transitional justice process in Sri Lanka. In this context, documentation can both be apart of active MDR systems, and in anticipation of eventual MDR systems.

Conceptual Tensions in Human Rights Documentation in a Transitional Justice Context

There are various conceptual tensions that arise in human rights documentation in a transitional justice context that it is important for CSOs to be aware of.

(1) UN/official versus unofficial

There are ongoing conversations around the world in transitional justice contexts about the role of CSOs in conducting "unofficial" investigations into human rights violations, and the weight and credibility of such investigations. On one side of the debate, there are many who feel that the highly-specialized, technically trained and experienced experts that conduct UN or official investigations cannot be replaced. On the other side, many believe that CSO "unofficial" investigations often raise situations that may not be addressed otherwise, and should not be dismissed or discouraged.

(2) Evidence versus Information

There are usually very specific and narrow parameters around what types of human rights documentation would be admissible evidence in court, whether the court is international, hybrid or domestic. There is therefore a tension between documenting human rights violations with a legal focus versus taking a broader perspective on the

kinds of truths that should be documented.

"The burden of the evidentiary imperative can limit recording of other truths" – Catherine Kennedy, South African History Archives

(3) Truth

"...truth "is so commonly used that it seems to be a transparent notion, clear to all who are involved or interested in redressing past abuses, but 'truth,' like 'justice' and 'reconciliation', is an elusive concept that defies rigid definitions." – Parlevliet

Since in the transitional justice context, the truth is often being sought out because it has been hidden and obscured, it can be difficult to determine what is actually the truth.

II - WHY DOCUMENT IN CONTEXT OF DEALING WITH THE PAST?

The Dealing with the Past (DWP) framework is now internationally accepted to have four main pillars:

- Right to Know
- Right to Justice
- Guarantee of Non-Recurrence
- Right to Reparation
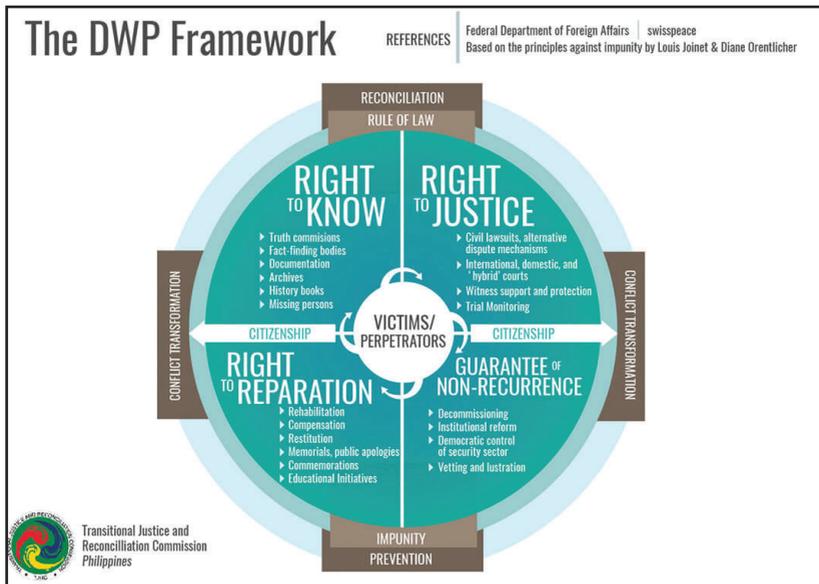
Documentation is normally seen as primarily located under the "right to know" pillar but actually underlies all of the DWP pillars. Effective human rights documentation by civil society can aid in progress towards all four pillars of DWP.

Human Rights Documentation, among other things, can:

- Promote accountability;
- Support prosecutions and legal redress, through preservation of evidence;
- Ensure historical memory;
- Enable and guarantee the right to know;
- Preserve diversity, in actively preserving the stories and experiences of people across the economic, political and social spectrum, and not just those with economic or political power; and
- Enable, support and inspire memory work and memorialization[3]

CSOs unlike "official" investigations or mechanisms are able to commence documentation projects in anticipation of "official" mechanisms set up under DWP, and can thereby also influence the creation of such mechanisms.

Here are some examples of how local CSOs around the world conduct human rights documentation effectively in this anticipatory stage where "official" DWP mechanisms have not necessarily been set up:

- **_ND – Burma_ -** ND-Burma is a collaborative space for Human Rights Documentation for NGOs. The NGOs use Martus (a technology tool) to collect standardized data on human rights violations and then produce reports and engage in joint advocacy initiatives. It is an "unofficial" documentation project in Burma in anticipation of transition and in hope of influencing the government to commence a truth-seeking mechanism.

[3]Grace Lile, WITNESS <https://witness.org> ; SAHA Reconstructing Historical Memory Toolkit <http://www.saha.org.za/>.

- ***Syria Tracker -*** Syria Tracker compiles citizen reports on human rights violations in Syria and maps them using Kenyan-based Ushahidi software. Over 4500 reports have been compiled and Syria Tracker hopes to provide details on the fatalities, and the name, location and details of each victim if an accountability mechanism is ever established for Syria.

- ***Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG) -*** FAFG is a not-for-profit technical-scientific organization that "contributes to the strengthening of the justice system and to the respect for human rights through the investigation and documentation of historical violations." The evidence FAFG uncovered in exhumations of a former military base helped put 8 top former military leaders on trial in Guatemala.

DWP and Sri Lanka

In the Sri Lankan context, the government made commitments in Resolution 30/1 to the Human Rights Council in October 2015 to develop mechanisms under the four pillars of DWP. Specifically the Government committed to establishing: (1) a Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-Recurrence Commission; (2) an Office of Missing Persons; (3) an Office for Reparations; and (4) a Judicial Mechanism with a Special Counsel's Office for Accountability.

While there is continued skepticism around the country about whether the Government will actually follow through on its commitments, there is anticipation that eventually DWP mechanisms will be created for the Sri Lankan context. Sri Lankan

CSOs are therefore in the anticipatory stage discussed above.

In addition to engaging in human rights documentation projects that could eventually fit into "official" DWP mechanisms, CSOs in Sri Lanka also have an opportunity similar to that of ND-Burma to try and create documentation that will influence the Government and/or the international community to work towards establishing those DWP mechanisms.

Here are some examples of how human rights documentation could aid in the four pillars of DWP in the Sri Lankan context:

(1) Right to Know
- Collection of documents, evidence and witness and victim-survivor statements that can support victim-survivors and witnesses to testify before a future Office of Missing Persons and/or truth-telling mechanism
- Preservation of records from past commissions on disappearances in Sri Lanka that could contribute towards the future Office of Missing Persons

(2) Right to Justice
- Collection and preservation of evidence for future prosecutions and legal redress through the HRC mandated judicial mechanism or prosecutions internationally
- Promotion of accountability through highlighting crimes committed and possible identities of perpetrators during the war

(3) Right to Reparations
- Documentation of economic hardships faced by victim-survivors as a result of the war and crimes committed by State and Non-State actors during and after the war
- Documentation of communities' perspectives on how reparations should be conducted

(4) Guarantees of non Non-Recurrence
- Studying and documenting communities' perspectives on the root causes of the conflict
- Supporting memorialization work through preservation of diverse and complex historical memory

The above are just a few examples of how human rights documentation work in the Sri Lankan context could further the four pillars of DWP. Importantly, many of the examples of documentation could fall under more than one pillar.

Ultimately, when undertaking documentation projects, CSOs in Sri Lanka should be cognizant of the DWP framework and take a holistic approach to how documentation could fit within it.

III – DETERMINING WHAT TO DOCUMENT

Human Rights Documentation is generally about the documentation of human rights violations and abuses. However, the specific information a CSO seeks to document will vary depending on the purpose of the documentation.

Noting that there are many purposes for human rights documentation in a transitional justice context as outlined by the previous chapter, this section will outline some of the ways to think about determining what to document based on two of the main purposes for documentation.

(1) To preserve evidence/for accountability in law
In a transitional justice context, the collection of evidence for use in accountability proceedings tends to be a primary focus of CSOs. When this is the purpose for documentation, then a CSO should be documenting based on the elements required to prove the relevant human rights violation in the applicable law. But how do we determine the applicable law?

When CSOs are operating in an anticipatory stage and an accountability mechanism has not been established yet, the applicable law is not clear. So it would be advisable to look to international human rights, humanitarian or criminal law to see how human rights violations are defined generally. In particular, it is useful to consider how violations are defined in any international human rights treaties the country in question has ratified or at the very least, become signatory to.

Example – Enforced Disappearances

In Sri Lanka if a CSO is documenting enforced disappearances for the purpose of preserving evidence for future prosecutions, the applicable law is not clear because Sri Lanka has not defined it in the legislation for the Office of Missing Persons nor has it set up legislation for a Judicial Mechanism. However, Sri Lanka did ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances in May 2016. Even though Sri Lanka has not yet fulfilled its ratification obligation of criminalizing enforced disappearances, it will eventually have to under international human rights law which means that the elements of "enforced disappearances" as they are defined under the Convention will most likely appear as applicable law before any future prosecution.

Under the Convention, the key elements of an "enforced disappearance" are:

1. Arrest/Detention/Abduction/Deprivation of Liberty
2. Carried out by Agents of the State or those acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, OR non-state actors
3. Refusal by those persons after to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or concealment of the fate or whereabouts of such disappeared person
4. Where the objective result of the above is to place the disappeared person outside the protection of the law

So if a CSO is trying to document enforced disappearances for future prosecutions, they should think about how to gather evidence of these 4 elements in their documentation.

This strategy is not perfect and has the risk of taking too narrow a view of what to document, but is one common approach when CSOs are operating in the anticipatory stage and trying to collect evidence for eventual prosecutions. In particular, this approach will mean that CSOs are only documenting incidents that fall within the legal definition of "human rights violations", and will exclude any other human rights abuses that fall outside that category.

(2) To aid memorialization projects

When CSOs are engaged in human rights documentation in order to enable, support and inspire memorialization, they can take a much broader view of what it is they should be documenting.

Generally, documentation for memorialization work can entail anything that helps the CSO document perspectives and information relating to:

- Reconstruction of the past – identifying what, how, why specific events happened and how they were experienced;
- Assessing the impact of war – reconstructing context and situation; and
- The present and the future

But importantly, when CSOs are working towards memorialization, a critical first step is evaluating existing documentation of a conflict and identifying where the gaps are greatest and where documentation could best support a multi-faceted and diverse view of that conflict. CSOs should be careful not to contribute towards reinforcing one dominant or majoritarian view of history.

**Example of Documentation for Memorialization –
Memoria Abierta (Argentina)**

Created by a coalition of eight human rights organizations,
this collective has used a variety of techniques to conduct
memorialization work including mapping hundreds of
detention and torture sites ("Typography and Memory"),
organizing the collection of over 700 oral histories, building
accessible archives documenting the past, and organizing
awareness programs in Argentina about human rights
abuses of past authoritarian regimes.

IV - TYPES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR DOCUMENTATION

In human rights documentation in a transitional justice context there is a wide variety of types and sources of information that can be collected, serving different purposes. This chart is not meant to be exhaustive but rather serve as a starting point to think about the types and sources of information CSOs in Sri Lanka can consider collecting as part of human rights documentation.

Type of Information	Source	Examples in Sri Lanka
Testimony and Voice	- Written, film and audio confessions by perpetrators of human rights violations - Statements by witnesses of the violations, victims and survivors of victims	- Photographs of individuals disappeared and transcripts of statements regarding same made by relatives - Documentary testimony of victims found in Channel 4 "No Fire Zone" documentary on last phase of war - Interviews with victims of sexual violence
Records of Proceedings	- Official files and records of courts, tribunals and truth commissions	- Records of proceedings before all past commissions in Sri Lanka such as the Paranagama Commission and the Udalagama Commission

Records of Investigations	- Official files and records of investigations and monitoring efforts conducted by governments, inter-governmental bodies, and human rights advocacy and watchdog groups	- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sri Lanka Investigation on Sri Lanka Report - Civil Society reports monitoring human rights situation in Sri Lanka over the years
"Found" Documents and Artefacts	- Documents and data sets that are discovered unexpectedly	- Documents relating to Sri Lankan conflict in "Wiki-Leaks" – the database of classified information founded by Julian Assange
Social Media	- Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and personal and institutional webpage	- Cached pages of military and government websites - Reporting on Facebook and Twitter during last phase of war
Innovative Technology	- Information available through modern technology	- Satellite imagery of location of populations in the Vanni during the last phase of the war

What type and source of information should you document?

The type and source of information a CSO documents will depend heavily on the purpose for which that CSO is conducting human rights documentation.

For example, if an NGO is collecting evidence for use in prosecutions, then the type and source of information will have

to meet evidentiary standards to be admissible in court. This may mean the exclusion of "found" evidence where a chain of custody cannot be traced.

If on the other hand a CSO is looking to document human rights violations for the purpose of educating the public about mass atrocities that have occurred, the CSO may wish to use sources and types of information that are considered more accessible to the average citizen.

Regardless of what purpose a CSO is conducting human rights documentation for, that CSO should ensure the quality and integrity of that information, which will be discussed in a later section.

V – FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF COLLECTING INFORMATION

Once a CSO has decided what information it wants to collect and the type/source of the information, the next step is to begin collecting that information. Regardless of the type of information, it is important for any CSO engaging in human rights documentation to observe the following foundational principles for ethical human rights information collection:

1. **Do no harm**

   Do no harm is the most important ethical principle a CSO should follow when documenting human rights and it "means preventing and minimizing any unintended negative effects of activities that can increase people's vulnerability to physical and psychosocial risks."[4]

2. **Informed Consent**

   Proper and informed consent requires that people providing information to a CSO about human rights violations confirm, preferably in writing, that they have been informed about and understand the following, after which they agree voluntarily and freely to participate in the documentation:

   - Purpose and content of the documentation;
   - Meaning of confidentiality and whether it applies or does not apply to the information they are providing;
   - Future use of the information they are providing;
   - Risks and benefits associated with participating; and
   - Identity of CSO and the person receiving information from them and means of contacting the CSO afterwards[5]

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[4] *PILPG, 2016 supra* at p 23.
[5] *Ibid.*

Informed consent is an ongoing exercise and should be done at every stage of the information gathering process and individuals should be clearly told that they are free to withdraw or change their mind without consequence about providing information or having that information used at those various stages.

3. **Confidentiality**

   Confidentiality requires that CSOs work diligently to protect information gathered on human rights violations and the identity of victims and witnesses. There are different levels of confidentiality that CSOs may employ depending on the information they are documenting. In all cases the level of confidentiality that will be applied to information documented must be explained to victims and witnesses who are participating. It is generally best practice to keep the identities of victims and witnesses confidential where to do otherwise would put those individuals at risk, and to keep participants informed of the limits of a CSO's confidentiality measures.

4. **Referrals to Professional Services**

   CSOs must determine processes for referring victims and witnesses to services they may need as a result of the documentation process including, health, psychological, legal and economic assistance. Particularly with victims who have suffered severe trauma, CSOs should determine whether victims have appropriate personal and community support systems before engaging them in documentation. There is always a risk that human rights documentation, even if done with best practices and intentions, can cause victims to re-live

trauma they have experienced, and CSOs should consider it an obligation to support those individuals through that process.

5. **Recognizing and Minimizing Re-Traumatisation**
   According to the PILPG, in order for CSOs to recognize the risks and prevent re-traumatization to victims and witnesses when conducting interviews in the course of human rights documentation, they should:
   - Be familiar with the signs of trauma
   - Be careful not to assume that the victim or witness is evasive or otherwise purposefully distorting the truth
   - Focus on the narrative and elements of the crime instead of the timeline of events (E.g. Ask 'what else happened?' instead of 'what happened next?' – focus on a timeline can come up in later interviews)
   - Use a conversational approach
   - Ask open-ended questions
   - Make sure victim or witness has some control in interview (e.g. deciding when to take breaks, seating, etc.)
   - Understand that it takes time to develop a relationship of trust – give victims and witnesses the time to build that trust and don't press them on questions they are uncomfortable sharing answers to at first
   - Engage professionals to conduct the interviews if the risk of re-traumatization is high
   - Acknowledge the victim's or witness's pain or trauma and demonstrate empathy and concern
   - Do not take strong reactions personally and manage your own emotional responses[6]

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[6] *PILPG, 2016 supra* at p 25.

Most importantly, when interviewing victims and witnesses, CSOs should act with respect for human dignity and ensure that provide interviewees with professional support services where needed.

6. **Managing Expectations**

    In the Sri Lankan context where there have been numerous fruitless commissions and inquiries over the years, and broken promises made by the Government, there is growing disillusionment with human rights documentation as many victims and witnesses have gotten fed up with the lack of results, particularly in the North-East. It is therefore especially important for CSOs who engage in human rights documentation in Sri Lanka to manage people's expectations so as not to further contribute to this disillusionment. Do not make promises or guarantees about the use or outcomes of the documentation which you cannot keep or have the power to control.

7. **Demonstrating Impartiality**

    CSOs must keep in mind that when conducting human rights documentation their duty is to preserve, collect and record the truth, and not make judgment, which can be done by DWP mechanisms later on. In order to prevent bias and accusations of being swayed by a political agenda, CSOs should be systematic in their documentation and professional.

8. **Preserving the Chain of Custody of Information**

    For human rights documentation to be considered reliable and credible, CSOs must preserve the chain of custody, which describes every handler of the information, from the source/origin to final production by that CSO.

A complete and unbroken chain of custody will account for:

- The location of a piece of information from the moment it is created/received to the moment it reaches the CSO;
- The identities of all of the people who handled the information at any point; and
- The purpose and use for which each of the above persons handled the information.

Generally, the shorter the chain of custody the more reliable the information will be considered.

VI-ENSURING QUALITY/INTEGRITY OF INFORMATION

Documents collected as part of human rights documentation should have:

- Reliability;
- Credibility; and
- Probative value or usefulness.

In order for documents to be considered reliable and credible and thereby have probative value or usefulness, CSOs should try to establish answers to the following questions whenever they collect or create human rights documentation:

- What documentation exactly did they receive or create?

- When and where was the documentation produced?

- Who produced the document?

- Who collected the information for the document?

- If the information was collected by someone other than the CSO, what is the credibility of that person/organization and is there a corroborating source?

- If the information was collected or document was made by another institution, was it made during the course of regular activity by the institution? Was the document made by a person with expertise and are there strong internal controls within that institution?

- If the document is physical evidence or a hard copy, what was the chain of custody for the documentation before it reached the CSO? (Note specific dates, locations and persons)

- What motivated the original provider of information to provide it? Was the information provided voluntarily?

If the documentation is digital, then CSOs should look to establish the Metadata of that information, which records details about the source and authorship of the information. According to the "Dublin Core Metadata Standards" commonly used in the human rights field, the following data about digital information should be recorded to ensure its reliability:
- Creator, Contributor(s) and Publisher
- Title of resource
- Dates of events in lifecycle of digital information (Created, Available, Modified, Submitted and/or Accepted)
- Language
- Type of information and Format
- Extent (size)
- Medium
- Subject, Description and Identifier
- Coverage
- Rights
- Audience
- Provenance

If a CSO wants to take additional steps there are applications now that permit creators to embed and encrypt metadata into digital information in a manner that prevents corruption of that metadata. Examples specific to human rights documentation include: *CameraV, IBA eyewitness to Atrocities,* and *KoBo Toolbox.*

VII – SECURITY

The most important aspect of human rights documentation in the Sri Lankan context is maintaining the security of the documentation and any persons involved in collecting or providing information. The first step towards managing security is conducting risk assessments, followed by developing measures to maintain security. In some instances the result of the risk assessment may be determining that the security risk is too high to proceed with human rights documentation. It is important that CSOs are honest about this and don't ignore the security risks for the sake of proceeding with planned documentation projects.

(A) ASSESSING RISK

To people providing information (victims, survivors, witnesses)
First and foremost, before a CSO commences any human rights documentation they must assess the potential risks to people from who they will be collecting information. CSOs should determine the possibility of any of the following risks:

- Retaliation, intimidation or threats by alleged perpetrators, their families and their supporters against victims or witnesses and/or their families
- Punishment, including physical violence, by members of the immediate community, family or caregiver
- Coercive pressure to force victims or witnesses to reconcile with perpetrators
- Re-traumatization

- Attempts to secure financial gains for families of victims or witnesses that may take priority over justice for victims or witnesses
- Rejection by family members or the community, resulting for instance in isolation or, as occurs often in the case of sexual and gender-based violence, abandonment of children.
- Loss of livelihood
- Loss of access to schools and vocational opportunities; and -
- Arrest and punishment – for example where certain acts are criminalized

To CSO workers conducting documentation

When determining risks to CSO workers a CSO should answer the following questions:

- Is access to the area in which the CSO worker will be working and is travel within it dangerous?
- Are the particular locations safe to visit?
- Are there fighting-related risks or natural disaster risks?
- Is there a heavy presence of State or Non-State armed groups and will they pose a threat to the worker?
- Will the worker experience vicarious trauma from dealing with the trauma of others?
- Are there risks associated with the worker being found in the possession of human rights documentation information or evidence?
- Will communities ostracize CSO workers for participating in human rights documentation due to interference by security forces?

In addition, CSOs should consider the following questions about risks that could arise as a result of the work that are not directly to the CSO worker:

- Will the work put local partner organizations at risk? For example, at risk of being de-registered?
- Will the work put other work the CSO is involved in at risk?

To Documents being Collected/Created

In order to maintain the safety of victims, witnesses and CSO workers involved in a human rights documentation project, it is important for a CSO to seriously consider the following questions to assess the risks to documents being collected/created:

- Can documents be transported safely without confiscation?
- Is it possible to collect information safely without unwanted detection?
- Is it possible to safely secure the information, digitally or in physical form, for long periods of time?
- Is it possible to store documents in an environment safe from the elements and any security risks?

(B) TOOLS/TIPS TO PROTECT INFORMATION/SOURCES

Once a CSO has conducted risk assessments and decided to proceed with human rights documentation, it is important that they develop methods for securing and protecting the documentation they collect/create.

Protecting the Physical Record

When a CSO receives a physical record or document, here are some strategies for security measures that can be taken to preserve and protect it:

- Take photographs of records and sources immediately after receiving or creating them
- Make copies of documents where possible
- Store documents in a secure location safe from the elements (fire, water, humidity, etc.)
- Separate confidential information from non-sensitive information and store separately
- For confidential information:
  - Encode identity information of victims and witnesses and keep key code separate from documents
  - Restrict the number of people who have access to the confidential information to an absolute minimum
  - Store hard copies of confidential information in a locked cabinet or location, separate from non-sensitive information
  - Avoid placing obvious labels on folder or cabinets containing confidential information
  - Avoid carrying confidential information around unless necessary

Protecting Electronic Records

More commonly now, human rights documentation is usually created and collected in electronic form. This poses a unique set of security risks and threats and CSOs should take specific electronic security measures to protect this information as follows:

- Use external, encrypted, and password protected storage devices and memory sticks for storage rather than computer hard drives.
  - Use removable hard disks. Portable devices are easier to hide and can be transported/carried off premises quickly in case of emergency evacuation. These devices

also need to be password protected and should never be left unprotected in the office. If a computer is stolen, the consequences will be less severe if its hard drive does not contain sensitive information.
- o Make sure to enable disk encryption on your computer
- Equip computers/devices with reliable anti-virus, anti-spyware, and firewall software, as well as a boot-up password to prevent others from accessing them.
- Encrypt all sensitive electronic files and protect them with a password. Ensure that electronic documents are regularly transferred to a secure storage site. This may be the organization's head office or another security place.
- Transfer to a safe location outside of the country where the violations occurred.
- Ensure that electronic documents are regularly backed-up. Back ups must be stored in a separate place.
- Print important materials if and when needed – print can be back up for digital records

Examples of Tools for Data Security
(see Appendix for links to these tools)

Encryption tools available for free on the internet:
- GNU Privacy Guard (for Windows, Mac and Linux)
- AxCrypt (for Windows only)
- TrueCrypt (used by several CSOs)

A practical web guide on security data storage using free software is Security in-a-box.
Secure communication tools, which CSOs can use to bolster the security of their internal emails and messages: *Tor*, *PKE* and *VPn*

VIII - COORDINATING DOCUMENTATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

An important tool for CSOs engaged in human rights documentation is coordination of their work so as to ensure it is as broad and encompassing as possible. Coordination of documentation will prevent duplication, and ensure that the human rights documentation landscape in a country does not have any large gaps.

The first step towards developing a plan of coordination is to map the documentation landscape and see what already exists. The following framework is a useful tool for collecting and recording information about existing bodies of records, collections, and documents pertaining to human rights.

	A descriptive name for the collection / records accumulation
Location:	Where are the records currently located?
Description:	A description of the nature and content of the records, including indications of the range of document / media types, quantities of records, etc., estimated age of materials
Format	Indicate whether the records are physical, digital or both.
Created by:	Any background / contextual information about who may have been responsible for the creation of the materials contained within this collection and when they may have been created (range of years, etc)
Collected by:	Any background / contextual information about how the materials were brought together into this collection – who collected them and when, for what purpose, etc.
Copyright:	Any information available about who may hold copyright for the materials
Ownership	Who owns the materials or controls access to them?
Date accessed:	Source of assessment (ie: did you see them yourself, did someone tell you about it, who controls access, are their sensitivities etc etc)
Preservation issues	Any information about physical or digital materials that are in a poor condition. NB: Digital materials are often at greater risk because older formats become obsolete more quickly, or the equipment needed to access the digital records is no longer available.
Access issues	Any information about whether these materials can be accessed currently and by whom.
Security issues	Any information about possible sensitivities, potential risks of records being vanished, hidden, destroyed, including any potential risks to individuals / groups identified in records.
Finding aids?	Record information about any indices, registers, databases, inventories, or any metadata records that may help to find information resources within this collection.
Method of assessment:	How was this audit information obtained? Were the materials examined in person? Or was this information collected from another person? If so, record details of who told you, how they know about the records, when they last saw the records, etc.
Date and location of assessment:	Date on which the collection was accessed or described / this form was completed.
Assessed by:	Who completed this form?

Source: Catherine Kennedy, South African History Archive

The focus in coordinating documentation is not on the sources of information, which may compromise confidentiality and the self-interest of different CSOs, but rather on the records created and collected by each organization.

APPENDIX – Other Resources

Other Human Rights Documentation Guides

- Field Guide for Civil Society Documentation of Serious Human Rights Violations by PILPG http://publicinternationallawandpolicygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PILPG-Field-Guide-for-Civil-Society-Documentation-of-Serious-Human-Rights-Violations-1.pdf
- Documenting International Crimes in Syria: A Comprehensive Case Study Approach by Free Syrian Lawyers Association
- http://all4syria.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/FSLA_Internatl_Crimes_in_Syria_Report.pdf
- Community Watchdog Handbook for Community Based Activists on Documenting Human Rights Violations
- http://www.sithi.org/admin/upload/education/Documentation_Handbook_ENG_2011_12_06.pdf

Security/Encryption Tools mentioned in Guide

- GNU Privacy Guard (for Windows, Mac and Linux) https://www.gnupg.org/
- AxCrypt (for Windows only) http://www.axcrypt.net/
- TrueCrypt (used by several CSOs) http://truecrypt.sourceforge.net/
- Security in-a-box https://securityinabox.org/en

Adayaalam Centre for Policy Research is a research based centre for activism that works on public policy issues in Sri Lanka with a focus on those issues that affect the Tamil polity and the North-East of Sri Lanka.

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