



# HOW TO SET UP A SHELTER CITY?

## MANUAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS SHELTERS

MANUAL BY: JUSTICE AND PEACE  
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Local justice on a global scale

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Local justice on a global scale

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For more than forty-five years Justice and Peace Netherlands has actively promoted respect for human rights, human dignity, solidarity and social justice all over the world. Justice and Peace's approach is to link knowledge and expertise of our partners with a rights-based approach.

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# Introduction

Defending human rights in countries where such activities are seen as controversial or threatening to those in power is a courageous but hazardous task. While human rights defenders (HRDs) work to improve the respect for human rights in their communities, they often put their own life in jeopardy. In reaction, many governments, international organisations and civil society organisations have developed instruments and policies to support HRDs in their activities. Offering HRDs shelter, rest and respite through temporary relocation is one of the ways in which HRDs can be meaningfully supported.

It is not the purpose of temporary relocation for human rights defenders to leave their country permanently. Rather, the goal is to complement other initiatives such as advocacy, (security) training, accompaniment of HRDs during field missions or trial monitoring. Depending on the target groups and objectives of temporary shelters, they can either be used as a pre-emptive measure – to prevent burn-out or be away during an expectedly tense period, for instance – or as an emergency, a last resort measure when the threats are so high that staying in the country (or region) has become impossible. Aside from this, the relocation time can be used to strengthen the HRDs' capacities (through training and networking) and provide them with necessary mental space to re-strategize and re-energize. Shelter initiatives can therefore also pursue longer-term objectives.

While many relocation initiatives already exist around the world, more shelters are needed to deal with the high number of HRDs who are under threat. As an example, Justice and Peace receives about 300 applications per year. Importantly, there is a need to build up a flexible and diverse network of relocation initiatives that can accommodate the HRDs' different needs – long or short term, close to home or further away, rest-oriented or in emergency, etc.

## PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

For about 5 years now, Justice and Peace Netherlands has been implementing the Shelter City Initiative in The Netherlands, with currently 8 cities hosting HRDs at risk and 35 HRDs hosted. This has provided Justice and Peace with insights about how such shelters can be set up, as well as the needs of relocated HRDs.

The objective of this manual is to share Justice and Peace's experience with NGOs, national or local governments, universities or any other party interested in setting up shelters for human rights defenders at risk. As the local context matters, this manual offers general guidance rather than strict "how-to" rules. Based on the experience acquired with the Shelter City Initiative, it provides some tips, ideas and information about how such a programme can be implemented in practice. It is a work in progress, open to comments and suggestions.

The first part elaborates on some practical steps for getting started with temporary relocation. The second part deals with some of the essential aspects and practical issues related to the stay of human rights defenders in shelter programmes. Overall, examples from the Shelter City

Initiative are used to illustrate the purpose, indicated in blue boxes. The orange boxes highlight tips and suggestions.

## ***What is the Shelter City Initiative?***

The Shelter City Initiative is a national network coordinated by Justice and Peace Netherlands, in cooperation with Dutch cities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to protect human rights defenders (HRDs) by providing them with shelter, rest and respite. During their stay in The Netherlands, the HRDs continue their work in safety and can take a breath. While relocated, they have the opportunity to grow their network of civil society organisations and political contacts in The Netherlands, Brussels, and elsewhere. The HRDs also follow trainings to strengthen their skills. They can have access to medical and psychological care. On the other hand, through public events and workshops, HRDs contribute to raising awareness about human rights among the citizens of the Shelter Cities.

The project started in September 2012 in The Hague. The idea emerged from a meeting of HRDs from Justice and Peace's international network held in December 2010, where the need for safe spaces was expressed as a way to contribute to their security. Progressively, other cities joined the project, bringing the number of participating cities in The Netherlands to 8 in 2016, with a current total host capacity of about 20 HRDs per year. More cities are expected to join in the future.

The selection of participants to the Shelter City Initiative is done twice a year through open calls. All their costs are covered and logistical facilities provided. In The Netherlands, HRDs can first of all benefit from a safe environment and properly rest. They also have the opportunity to use their stay to strengthen their capacities, network, or raise awareness about the situation in their country.

Any question? Contact us at [sheltercity@justiceandpeace.nl](mailto:sheltercity@justiceandpeace.nl).

# Part 1: Getting started

## 1.1. Analyse the context

**Security** is the primary consideration for setting up the shelter – as it should per definition be safe. While some regions or countries are safe for some, they might be less safe for others. Some countries are for instance well-suited to host foreign HRDs, but local HRDs might need to get further away. The topic on which HRDs work is also of importance: Senegal might be a safe place for HRDs working on democratic change or fighting impunity, but not for those working on LGBTI rights. The porosity of borders, collaboration between intelligence services, the presence of a big Diaspora from the country of origin or the likelihood that an HRD is followed to a foreign country are factors that might increase the risk for relocated HRDs. Although the security analysis should always be made on a case-by-case basis, some general trends can be sketched beforehand.

**Available facilities**, such as the presence of international organisations, universities, etc. can be an asset and add value to the relocation, although not an absolute necessity. The presence of a strong civil society can also create a positive environment to support HRDs.

Finally, the local **cost of living** and the **reachability** of the shelter location should also be taken into account. Whether or not visas are required and for whom, and whether they can be obtained easily, are important factors.

### *Box 1 - Choose the right location*

- How safe is the planned location for hosting HRDs, and for whom?
- How porous are borders?
- Are visa easy to obtain to enter the country?
- Is it easy to travel to the country?
- Are there any institutions present in the planned hosting spot?
- Are the costs of living affordable in view of the budget available?

### *Ex. 1 - The Dutch Context*

- Visas can be difficult to get and are only valid for 90-day stays (renewable once), but good cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ensures the smooth delivery of travel documents.
- The Netherlands is a very safe country (although marginally, the presence of the ICC, Diaspora and diplomatic missions might pose a risk for some HRDs).
- Presence of many international organisations and international as well as local NGOs.
- Travel is relatively easy by plane.

## 1.2. Identify the actors

An important step in the process of setting up a shelter for HRDs is to identify which actors have a stake in protecting and supporting human rights defenders. Such actors might then become partners in the projects, either by providing funding or by taking part in the implementation.

**Support for the project** is of course important, because you will need, if not the active support, at least the tacit agreement of different actors. And of course funding will be easier to find if there is a will to host and support the HRDs locally. How the idea will be presented in a context where authorities are committed to support HRDs or, on the contrary, have tried to impede their work, is of course different. Context will therefore be key to determine which partners to involve and to what extent.

### **Ex. 2 - The Shelter City Partners**

The involvement of several actors in the Shelter City Initiative has proven crucial to its successful implementation. All the partners are able to meet their objectives through the project:

- *Justice and Peace*: as a human rights organisation, we work with HRDs worldwide on improving their security.
- *Dutch Cities*: see an opportunity to increase public awareness for human rights and contribute to support human rights worldwide, as well as improve their image as human rights champion.
- *The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs*: HRDs are a priority in its human rights foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, The Netherlands must implement the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders<sup>2</sup>. The Initiative is also a way to build up their image as human rights champion.
- *Universities and (human rights) local organisations*: can get direct information on human rights from field practitioners and benefit from their practical experience.

**Several international instruments** exist to protect and support human rights. Although most are non-binding, they have been adopted within international instances to which States are parties. They therefore translate the State parties' political commitment, and can be used to ensure their support. National law and policies can also provide some useful background for creating shelters for HRDs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.government.nl/topics/human-rights/contents/helping-human-rights-defenders>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/GuidelinesDefenders.pdf>

**Box 2 - Main international instruments supporting human rights defenders:**

United Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders</a> (1998) and its <a href="#">commentary</a> (2011)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Special Rapporteur</a> on the situation of human rights defenders (Human Rights Council)</li> </ul>
European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders</a> (2004, revised in 2008)</li> <li>• European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)</li> <li>• <a href="#">EU Liaison Officers Focal Points for Human Rights in EU delegations</a></li> </ul>
African Union (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa</a></li> </ul>
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Resolution on Human Rights Defenders in the Americas, 1999</a></li> </ul>
Council of Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Commissioner for Human Rights</a></li> </ul>
OSCE (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Focal Point for Human Rights Defenders and National Human Rights Institutions</a></li> </ul>
...	...

### 1.3. Define the target group, purpose and features of the shelter

Who you will be able to host and for how long will greatly depend on material constraints such as immigration laws, available staff, resources, funding, etc. but also on what you aim to achieve. There are no fixed rules, but what is important is to **establish clear selection criteria and procedures**. Beside, **defining the features of the shelter** can help the implementing organisation to target beneficiaries, necessary funds, potential donors, actors to involve, etc. This being said, keeping a certain degree of **flexibility** is crucial, as each case is different and requires a personalised handling.

Note that your network of local and international organisations will prove essential to verify the cases of the HRDs who you consider to host in the shelter.

### Box 3 - Possible features of the shelter programme

Feature	Practical output	Comments
<b>Duration</b>	Short term (3 months or less) <b>vs.</b> Long term (6 months, 1 year, etc.)	Look at what is possible under immigration laws.
<b>Target group</b>	Open to anyone <b>vs.</b> Specific target group (women HRDs, HRDs from a certain region, academics, journalists, HRDs working on a certain topic, etc.)	The nature of the host organisation and donors' restrictions might influence the profile of the HRDs hosted.
<b>Purpose</b>	Rest and respite / burnout prevention <b>vs.</b> Emergency support in the face of high threat	Responding to emergencies requires capacities to act quickly and host HRDs with little preparation time. In the case of rest and respite, psychological and/or medical support will be an essential component.
<b>Selection procedure</b>	Through calls <b>vs.</b> On a rolling basis  Open to all applicants (via website, etc.) <b>vs.</b> Through other partner organisations	There are pros and cons for each selection procedure. Working with calls increases the predictability of the programme and makes it easier to manage, especially when several partners are involved. On the other hand, receiving applications on a rolling basis enables to respond to emergencies, and makes the programme more flexible. Open calls require more screening work as they usually attract a lot of applicants whose cases must be verified.
<b>Support provided</b>	Basic support and rest <b>vs.</b> Possibility to follow trainings, network, volunteer, get medical and psychological care, etc.	It is above all a conscious choice of the implementing organisation. Look at what can be offered in the hosting city: are any international organisations, universities, NGOs or other civil society organisations present in the City? Who can offer support to the relocated HRDs? Is there public awareness for human rights? How much support staff is available?
<b>Dependents</b>	HRDs alone <b>vs.</b> HRDs with dependents/family	Immigration laws and available resources will be the key determinants. Note that opening shelters to dependents makes them more gender sensitive, as for WHRDs who are mothers, leaving their children behind is often a barrier.

### ***Ex. 3 - The selection procedure for Shelter City Netherlands***

Justice and Peace selects Shelter City participants through open calls for applications, which are published twice a year and sent out to our network of international and local organisations and official representations. The call is sent about two months before the start of the new round. From the moment the call is published, there are 3 to 4 weeks in which people can react and submit their application. HRDs can apply themselves or other organisations can apply for them.

The selection of participants is done by an independent Selection Committee. Members of the Committee have been selected for their expertise in human rights and knowledge of HRDs's local realities. They currently come from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hivos, and Free Press Unlimited, and the Committee is chaired by a professor from the Faculty of Law of the University of Amsterdam. Justice and Peace does not take an active part in the meeting of the Committee, but takes minutes and provides administrative support. Because of the high number of applications, Justice and Peace makes a pre-selection of qualified candidates, based on the selection criteria. Each case is then verified. Ultimately, the director of Justice and Peace approves the selected participants.

### ***Ex. 4 – Selection requirements for Shelter City Netherlands***

1. The applicant is a human rights defender, as defined in the UN Declaration on human rights defenders<sup>3</sup>.
2. The HRD is severely threatened or has long been working under pressure.
3. The HRD is willing and able to return to his/her country of origin and resume his/her work after 3 months.
4. The HRD speaks English (or French/Spanish) well enough to be able to live independently in The Netherlands and take part in activities.
5. The HRD is willing to speak about the human rights situation in his/her country of origin, to the extent in which it does not affect his/her security.
6. Travelling to and staying in The Netherlands will not be at the expense of the safety of the HRD and his/her family in the country of origin.

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<sup>3</sup> "Human rights defenders are those individuals, groups and organs of society that promote and protect universally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights defenders seek the promotion and protection of civil and political rights as well as the promotion, protection and realisation of economic, social and cultural rights. Human rights defenders also promote and protect the rights of members of groups such as indigenous communities. The definition does not include those individuals or groups who commit or propagate violence." General Affairs Council, *EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders*, 8 December 2008, para. 3.

## 1.4. Find means and resources

Like any project, hosting HRDs requires sufficient and adequate resources: supporting staff, accommodation, funds for travel and livelihood, etc. Some of those can be fulfilled in kind (volunteer staff, accommodation). There also exists a few emergency funds for human rights which can be applied to in order to cover expenses linked to the relocation of HRDs (see below).

Besides, structural funds might be necessary to cover functioning and administrative costs made by the implementing organisation. Implementing the project through already existing organisations or institutions (such as universities) might help overcome those issues. Private foundations or local and national governments that have human rights (defenders) among their priorities are some possible sources of funding.

### **Ex. 5 - Sources of funding of the Shelter City Initiative**

Shelter City Netherlands is funded by three main sources:

- The *municipalities* cover part of the local costs, such as local supporting staff, accommodation, livelihood, etc. A subsidy contract is usually signed between the municipality and the local organisation implementing the funds.
- The *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* mostly covers the costs for coordination of the project at national level by Justice and Peace (selection of HRDs, logistic support to HRDs while in The Netherlands, security analysis and training, follow-up after return, etc.)
- For the remaining part of the costs, Justice and Peace looks for external funds for individual HRDs (EIDHR small grants, Protect the Defenders, individual contributions, private donations, etc.) or relies on own funds

### **Box 4 – Ideas (non-exhaustive!) for short-term emergency funds**

Emergency fund of the European Institution for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)	<a href="http://www.eidhr.eu/funding">http://www.eidhr.eu/funding</a>
Protect the Defenders	<a href="https://www.protectdefenders.eu/">https://www.protectdefenders.eu/</a>
East and Horn of Africa Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)	<a href="http://www.defenddefenders.org/">http://www.defenddefenders.org/</a>
CSO Lifeline	<a href="https://www.csolifeline.org/">https://www.csolifeline.org/</a>
Freedom House	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/programs">https://freedomhouse.org/programs</a>
Freedom House LGBT Assistance programme	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/program/dignity-all-lgbt-assistance-program">https://freedomhouse.org/program/dignity-all-lgbt-assistance-program</a>
Urgent Action Fund	<a href="http://urgentactionfund.org/apply-for-a-grant/criteriado-i-fit/">http://urgentactionfund.org/apply-for-a-grant/criteriado-i-fit/</a>
Foreign representations	In some cases, Embassies are able support HRDs to relocate.

## Part 2: Hosting HRDs

### 2.1. Division of tasks

As mentioned, running a shelter for human rights defenders will necessarily involve different stakeholders. It is important to distinguish between partners who are essential to successfully carry out the project (a local implementing organisation, authorities willing to provide visas, donors), and those who could add value to the project but whose participation is not essential (education institutes for instance). This will of course depend on the local context.

Here are some of the actors who can typically be involved in shelter programmes for HRDs:

#### 1. IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATION

The host organisation is the organisation implementing the project. It can be any organisation or institute that has an interest in human rights and in supporting human rights defenders.

Important tip to keep in mind: hosting HRDs will be demanding a lot of time and energy from staff in charge of the coordination and daily accompaniment of the HRDs. Do not underestimate the time necessary for implementing the project.

##### a. Coordinator

The coordinator's main tasks are mostly to manage applications and the selection of HRDs (whether or not the final decision is taken by an independent committee), supervise their travel and stay, and deal with all aspects related to their security. Besides, the coordinator will obviously fulfil fundraising and other administrative and coordination tasks.

##### b. Case manager/supervisor/"buddy"

This/these person(s) support(s) the HRD in his/her daily pursuits and in establishing objectives for the stay. This person should know the city where the HRD is relocated well and speak a language in which the HRD can easily communicate. The case manager can help identify networking and training opportunities, as well as ensure the HRD receives adequate medical, legal or psychological support.

#### *Ex. 6 – Implementing organisations involved in the Shelter City Initiative*

In The Netherlands, the coordinating tasks (selection, security, supervision of travel and stay, etc.) and the tasks related to the daily accompaniment of the HRDs (finding accommodation, establishing the programme, etc.) are split. Justice and Peace Netherlands is the national coordinator, as well as implements the project locally in The Hague. In other cities, the following organisations implement the project:

- **Peace Brigade International**, Dutch Branch. This worldwide organisation is involved in the protection of HRDs in the field, mostly in Latin America.

- **Mondiaal Centrum**, a local organisation which aims to raise global awareness as well as foster understanding and tolerance between the diverse groups of inhabitants of the city.
- Amsterdam: **Tertium**, a research and strategy institute that engages society with complex topics related to energy, urban development and scientific innovation, as well as human rights.
- **University College Roosevelt** and **University College Groningen**, university education institutes which have human rights law and political science programmes.
- **Bureau Wijland**, a local organisation that stands for establishing sustainable links between people, organizations and society at large.
- **ContourdeTwern**, a local civil society organisation which aims at building a vibrant civil society with strong communities in which everyone has equal opportunities and participates in public life.

In all cities, several other partners also participate in the project by offering training, courses or contacts, organising conferences and activities, etc. Examples include local Amnesty International groups, universities, schools, higher education institutes, volunteers involved personally, etc.

## 2. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

**The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and/or Ministry of Justice** are important to have on board as cooperation with them will facilitate the delivery of visas or permits to stay in the country. Depending on the extent of their commitment to human rights, they can also provide financial support, support human rights defenders in their country, provide advice and information about potential candidates through embassies, etc.

## 3. MEDICAL, PSYCHO-SOCIAL AND LEGAL SUPPORT STAFF

It is important to establish good contacts with professionals who can provide support to HRDs, should the need arise for them to get psycho-social, medical or legal help. Professional staff should be aware of the context from which HRDs come, and when necessary speak their language. See below for more information.

## 4. MUNICIPALITIES AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

**Local civil society and municipalities** play an important role in the setting up of the local Shelter City Initiative. Their tasks range from financial and staff support to providing accommodation, contacts and training, or helping the HRD to build up a social life. Local partners can also be a good entry point to reach out to networks of people interested in human rights and willing to support the HRDs in different ways (social activities but also psychological support, language teaching, etc.).

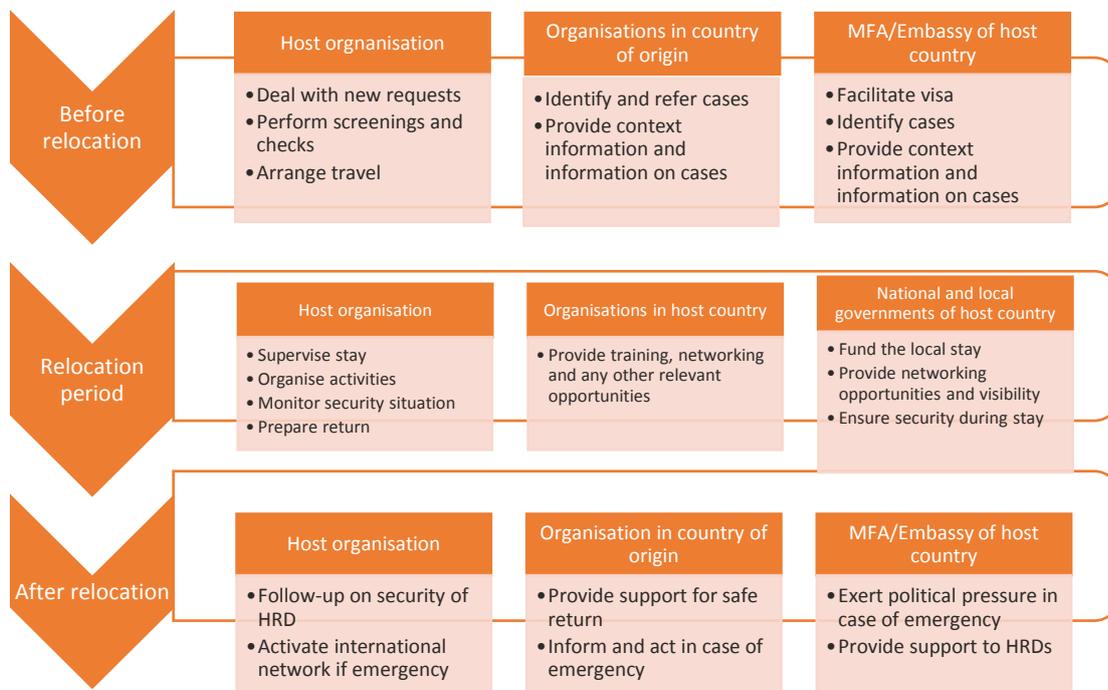
### Ex. 7 - The role of Municipalities in the Shelter City Initiative

One of the particularities of the Shelter City Initiative is the involvement of municipalities in the project. So far, decisions to become a Shelter City in the Netherlands have come from municipal councils. A motion was usually submitted by one or several council members supporting the idea. Besides this political approval, several requirements have to be met for the project to start in a city. First, the municipality will have to commit financially for the project. Second, the municipality has to find a local organisation willing to implement the project. Support can partially be done in-kind, like providing an apartment or providing support to the HRD through a municipal civil servant. Local contacts with (open) educational institutions, universities, and local organisations can also be made through the municipality.

## 5. UNIVERSITIES AND TRAINING/EDUCATION INSTITUTES

Win-win partnerships can be established with universities or research institutes. On the one hand, HRDs have first-hand knowledge regarding the human rights situation in their country. They have a very practical experience on the topic that can be very useful to researchers, students and scholars who do not have direct access to the field. On the other hand, courses in human rights law or international politics, for instance, can greatly benefit HRDs, who do not always have the opportunity to follow such courses in their own country.

### Box 5 – Actors and tasks



## 2.2. Support while in the shelter

### 1. PRACTICAL ASPECTS

- **Point of contact:** from the first day the HRD has to be able to rely on a clear point of contact who can supervise him or her in the first days, and who can be called in case of emergency. This is especially important in the first weeks.
- **Accommodation:** it should be a space where the HRDs can live and work in security and peace. Respect of their privacy is important.
- **Work place:** this is not only a peaceful place for the HRD to do his or her daily work, but also to socialise. The work place can for instance be situated at the local implementing organisation or a partner university.
- **Livelihood:** the HRD receives a monthly stipend. It is important that the HRDs receive sufficient and regular amounts so that it does not become a source of worry while they are in the shelter.

#### *Box 6 – Material support check-list*

- Furnished room (incl. internet connection / Wi-Fi)
- Work place
- Contact person
- Phone, if necessary (affordable charged sim-lock free phone + charged sim card)
- Stipend
- Any useful practical information

### 2. PROGRAMME

The programme during the relocation period has to be established based on the HRD's needs, taking into account what is available in the host city.

The possibility to get **physical and mental care** should always be offered, as all the HRDs hosted in the shelter will have undergone some form of psychological and/or physical pressure. Post-traumatic disorders of lesser or greater intensity are not uncommon. At home, HRDs are usually focused on their work and do not take the time to ask for professional help (if available at all). Their stay abroad is thus a good moment to get support. Support should be sensitive to the HRD's cultural and political context.

Depending on what can be offered in the host city, a **programme of activities** can be set up to ensure that the HRDs hosted reinforce their capacities and continue to work during their relocation.

- **Advocacy meetings:** with local, national, or international governments.
- **Meetings to exchange experiences and build up new work relations:** with local and international organisations, political parties, associations, education institutes, etc.
- **Trainings and courses:** the HRD can take language classes or other courses (human rights law, project management, etc.). If available, security training can also be provided either by the host organisation or by third parties.

- **Public lectures:** for university or high school students, or a wider audience of people who have an interest in human rights and the work of HRDs.
- **Internships/volunteering:** at a local organisation – this can result in a win-win exchange of experience for the HRD and the organisation.

### **Ex. 8 – Programme under the Shelter City Initiative**

Programmes for Shelter City participants are tailor-made and usually take shape in the first week, as a **plan and objectives for the stay** are established with the HRD.

The programme focusses on 4 main components: rest and respite, capacity-building, networking and awareness-raising. The latter comprises not only meetings with policy-makers and politicians, but also public lectures aiming to attract the attention on the human rights situation in the country of origin and on the work of the HRDs.

## 3. PREPARING RETURN

During the stay, the HRD and host organisation should closely **monitor the security situation** in the HRD's home country and prepare the return. If possible, security training should be provided and a **security plan** established for the HRD and his/her organisation.

### **Box 7 – HRD Security resources**

- Protection International have different *protection manuals*
- Front Lines Defenders' *Workbook on Security*
- Tactical Technology collective's *Holistic Security Manual*
- *Security-in-a-box* (digital security)
- The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation's *Integrated security manual*

As the essence of relocation programmes is to support HRDs at risk, situations where HRDs cannot go back after the planned relocation period will arise from time to time<sup>4</sup>. One-to-one solutions have to be found in such cases.

<sup>4</sup> About 15% of the cases in Justice and Peace's experience.

### *Box 8 – What if an HRD cannot go back?*

Some possibilities include:

- Lengthen the stay until the situation improves, if possible under migration rules. This can also offer more time to figure out longer-term alternatives.
- Find another relocation programme. However, most relocation programmes have only limited space.
- Find a study programme, internship, job, etc. in order to ensure longer term legal residence and a potential source of income
- Relocate somewhere else. The region of the HRD, which is culturally closer and where immigration rules might be more flexible, should be considered first if safe enough.
- Asylum is an option that will be politically very sensitive in most countries and can negatively impact the programme. It might be wise to have an open and ongoing discussion with authorities on this topic.

Additional funding will likely have to be found. Please refer to Box 4 for some possibilities. When HRDs have a family, their security (including financial) will also often have to be taken into account. Again, it is important for any organisation working on temporary relocation to set limits as to what can be provided in this respect.

## 2.3. Follow-up and support after return

The main task after return is to make sure that the HRD has arrived safely, and that he or she has reintegrated their community safely. Returning to a dangerous environment can be very challenging after some time spent in a safe place. While most HRDs are deeply committed and willing to carry on their work, support from abroad can be a strong moral boost. Building a broad international network, establishing security plans and maintaining regular contact with the HRD are some of the ways in which HRDs can get a feeling of safety and support. Foreign representations in the country of origin can also regularly be in touch with the HRD. Some programmes also provide returning HRDs with a support letter from authorities to show that they have support from abroad should anything happen.

It is important to be clear about the fact that HRDs are responsible for their own choices and safety. They are the ones eventually making decisions about their own life – although they can of course be guided and informed. Limits must therefore be clear as to how support extends after return.

*"You gave me my motivation back, made me feel important again as a human rights defender."*

Tomy (journalist from Honduras/Shelter City The Hague)

# HOW TO SET UP A SHELTER CITY?

The purpose of this manual is to offer broad but practical guidance on how to set up shelters for Human Rights Defenders at risk around the globe.

No time to read it all? Here is, in essence, **what you need to be able to start**:

- One or several local **implementing organisation(s)** willing to set up the shelter, handle requests and supervise the arrival, stay and return of sheltered human rights defenders.
- Funds**, unavoidably. Be creative: funding can be found for the shelter initiative as a whole, but relocated human rights defenders can also be sponsored individually
- Supportive authorities**. Both local and national governments can play an important role, from facilitating visa to providing accommodation.
- Partners** in the city, such as education institutes, psycho-social and medical professionals, local civil society organization, etc.
- And of course **Human Rights Defenders at risk** in your network or region who sometimes need to be away from their home country for a while.