Evaluation of the International Council of Human Rights Policy

Final Report

February 2010

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For the Department of International Development
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>CASALS</td>
<td>Casals and Associates inc, International development consultancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffey</td>
<td>Coffey International Development</td>
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<td>CIEL</td>
<td>Centre for International Environmental Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Climate Change’</td>
<td>Short title for ICHRP report ‘Climate Change and Human Rights – A Rough Guide’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>International Council on Human Rights Policy</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FINNIDA</td>
<td>Finnish International Development Agency</td>
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<td>GHF</td>
<td>Global Humanitarian Forum</td>
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<td>GSDRC</td>
<td>Governance and Social Development Resource Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Accountability Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>“The positive and negative, primary and secondary, long term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.” - OECD/DAC 2002 definition which emphasises the long-term nature of effects. Dictionary definitions tend to be concerned with the notion of physical impact but the effect of ideas is captured in the following: “the impression made by an idea, cultural movement, social group etc.” [Collins Dictionary]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>“an effect of one person or thing on another” [Collins Dictionary]</td>
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<td>ICHRP</td>
<td>International Council on Human Rights Policy</td>
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<td>‘Human Rights Standards’</td>
<td>Short title for ICHRP report ‘Human Rights Standards – Learning from experience’</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘NGO Accountability’</td>
<td>Short title for draft report ‘Human Rights organisations: rights and responsibilities’</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODI</td>
<td>Overseas Development Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODI/RAPID</td>
<td>ODI’s Research and Policy in Development project</td>
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<tr>
<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
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<td>OWT</td>
<td>One World Trust</td>
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Policy
“A plan of action adopted and pursued by an individual, government, party, business etc.” [Collins Dictionary]. The term is often however, used to mean what is more properly described as ‘public policy’ i.e. decision on a course of action or inaction taken by a government on a particular issue.

RRRT Pacific Community’s Regional Rights Team
SDC Swiss Development Cooperation
‘Sexuality’ short title for ICHR report ‘Sexuality and Human Rights – Discussion paper
SSN South-South Network
‘Terrorism’ Short title for ICHR report ‘Talking about Terrorism: Risks and choices for human rights organisations
TI Transparency International
TOR Terms of Reference
UN United Nations
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID United States Agency for International Development
WB World Bank
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report is an evaluation of the International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP); a Geneva based human rights organisation set up in 1997 to carry out practical research into dilemmas and problems in the field of human rights. A range of donors comprising governments, UN agencies, NGOs and private foundations fund the ICHRP. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) is one of these donors and currently provides core funding of £350,000 per annum. The Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) also makes contributions which vary by year. This evaluation was commissioned by DFID and is supported by FINNIDA. It was carried out by a team of three independent consultants: Asmita Naik, Mark de Pulford and Helen Baños Smith contracted by Coffey International Development under the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC).

2. The evaluation was carried out between late August and December 2009. The terms of reference (Appendix E) required the evaluation to establish the quality of ICHRP research, its communication, use and dissemination as well as its outcomes/impacts especially upon policy makers. The evaluation adopted a user-focused approach which explored views on the quality and impact of four of the Council’s reports - ‘Climate Change’, ‘Corruption’, ‘Peace’ and ‘Terrorism’. It also considered internal factors and wider strategic issues which affect the organisation’s work. Evaluation methodology included document review, face-to-face and phone interviews, as well as the extensive use of questionnaires. The consultation was opened to some 6020 people through a variety of means; 104 individuals contributed directly (Appendix C). Despite this low response rate the team was satisfied that it had gathered sufficient information to make a well-founded analysis.

1.1 Principal Findings

3. The evaluation finds that ICHRP is much valued by the majority of its users; it is seen as a unique human rights organisation with a key role to play in human rights discourse by virtue of its independence and its ability to produce quality, cutting-edge work. Users praise the high quality of ICHRP’s reports and the relevance of its topics but point to the need for more practical guidance and improved reader-friendliness. The evaluation team, which carried out a peer review of a selection of ICHRP reports, concurs with these views and also notes ways in which ICHRP can strengthen its analysis and use of data.

4. ICHRP is able to show an influence on the thinking of other NGOs, multilateral organisations/UN agencies through some of its work though impacts on national government policy-makers are markedly less. Impacts arise opportunistically, as in the case of ‘Climate Change’, where ICHRP’s report perfectly timed with the growing prominence of an issue on the global agenda, or by strong networking and strategic partnerships, as in the case of ‘Corruption’. The latter is a particularly good model for ICHRP’s future work as it shows how impacts can be generated for more specialised subjects of limited interest, more likely typical of ICHRP’s output. It is worth recalling that ICHRP is a small organisation and has made these achievements with a relatively limited budget.

5. Although ICHRP’s work is valued by its current consumers, the evaluation heard from stakeholders in government, NGOs and the donor community, who do not view its work as relevant to themselves or to the policy agenda as a whole. ICHRP has low visibility in the wider international arena. Even its closest supporters have to concede that it is little known amongst NGOs let alone governments; with an inference that it serves mainly a limited group of human rights thinkers whose job it is to be interested in human rights ideas, “it operates within a small, cliquey circle, talking mainly to folk it knows and who know it”, was a typical criticism.

6. These are important challenges for ICHRP. Despite the good work done on individual reports, it is at the core of ICHRP’s mandate to “bring this to the attention” of policy-makers and to “inform discussion of human rights policy”. It further commits to producing work of “practical relevance”. The organisation needs a stronger profile with policy-makers at all levels, including policy-makers in
government, if it is to fully succeed in its mission and continue to attract funding in an increasingly competitive environment.

1.2 Principal Recommendations

7. There are a number of ways ICHRP's operations can be enhanced to meet these challenges. The changes needed are not fundamental, ICHRP remains a much needed and viable institution in the way its founders conceived, but significant adjustments to its approach and ways of working are desirable. Central is the need for a more strategic approach to planning and partnerships with policymakers as well as better communication, dissemination and promotion of its work. The evaluation report makes many suggestions for how the Council might develop its role, mandate and mission, as well as its partnerships with others; how it can enhance its research process and inner workings; and expand its range of work and funding base. These are key strategic questions which merit examination and discussion by the whole Council. The evaluation report focuses on a few key actionable and priority recommendations which are central to strengthening ICHRP as an institution irrespective of wider decisions on its role and activities:

- **Communications** - Greater priority needs to be given to the communication, marketing and promotion of ICHRP’s work. This function continues to be under-valued in the organisation and needs to be more on a par with the research function itself. ICHRP should:
  - Recruit a suitably qualified communications professional in a role which is accorded sufficient resources and authority to enable it to function effectively.
  - Develop a communications plan (section 4.2.7) addressing issues such as house-style, branding, formats, methodologies and databases, and specifying the communication standards to be monitored in the individual research design documents especially regarding the identification and engagement of target audience.

- **Governing Council** - The ICHRP Council is a rich resource but could play a more active and engaged role. The ICHRP Secretariat should:
  - Prioritise the engagement of Council Members and commit appropriate resources to ensuring that this valuable resource is fully used particularly in facilitating connections with policy-makers and potential academic/NGO partners in the countries in which Council members are based and in following up ICHRP reports.

- **Funding** - Fund-raising is a continuing challenge for ICHRP resulting in a precarious existence which rests on the success of its most recent reports. ICHRP should:
  - Develop and implement a more holistic fund-raising strategy which draws on the potential for collaborative approaches, diverse funding sources and ways of maintaining and utilising relations with donors to the maximum effect.
  - Ensure this function is adequately supported by deputing a Council/Board Member to work with the Executive Director, and by ensuring sufficient technical and administrative support to produce quality funding proposals.

- **Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation** - ICHRP lacks a systemised approach to planning and monitoring its work. ICHRP should:
  - Adopt a medium term strategic plan.
  - Develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation plan.
  - Develop the capacities of all staff on monitoring and assign responsibilities to all with clear management from the top.
• **Internal Organisation** - A number of organisational factors related to internal structures, systems and resource allocation seem to hold ICHRP back from functioning at an optimum level. ICHRP should:
  
  • Make an assessment of internal issues and consider how these might be re-configured to better serve the interests of the institution as a whole. The incoming Executive Director with the support of suitably qualified organisational development specialists may wish to make use of the transitional period to review these matters.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

8. The International Council on Human Rights Policy (hereafter, the Council/ICHRP) was established in 1997 to carry out practical research into dilemmas and problems facing organisations working in the field of human rights. It is governed by an advisory council which currently has 24 members, six of whom sit on an Executive Board. The Geneva-based secretariat has eight full-time staff. A range of donors, comprising government departments, UN agencies, NGOs and private foundations, have funded ICHRP over the years. This is the fourth evaluation in the Council’s history. Previous evaluations include a general baseline in 2000; an impact evaluation commissioned by the Ford Foundation and SIDA in 2004 (hereafter, Ford/SIDA evaluation); and a review supported by the Finnish Foreign Ministry in 2005. This evaluation was commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and is being supported by the Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA). DFID has been a donor for several years and provides core funding, currently £350,000 per annum. FINNIDA makes a contribution of less than 100,000 Euros/year but not always on an annual basis.

9. This evaluation aims to better understand the work of ICHRP and its impact, and to help facilitate DFID’s assessment of its financial contribution to the ICHRP; alongside the wider issues on which such decisions are based. The evaluation was carried out by a team of 3 independent consultants: Asmita Naik, Mark de Pulford and Helen Baños Smith contracted by Coffey International Development under the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC). The report is organised into three parts: **Background** which sets out the team approach, evaluation framework and methods; **Findings** which gives an assessment of the quality and impact of ICHRP’s work based on the views of its users, and gives the team’s assessment of factors internal to the organisation which affect its work; and **Conclusions and Recommendations** which draws together the observations of the team and suggests ways forward.

2.2 Evaluation Approach

2.2.1 Evaluation Focus

10. The terms of reference (TOR) required the evaluation to establish the quality of ICHRP research, how it is communicated, used and disseminated as well as its outcomes/impacts, especially upon policy-makers (Appendix E). The experience of other organisations engaged in similar work was also of interest. The team prepared an inception paper at the start of the exercise which proposed a user focused review looking at questions of quality, usage/impact. This involved a bottom-up approach based on an analysis of specific research projects (as favoured by DFID/ICHRP) with wider strategic issues taken up as and when relevant.

2.2.2 Evaluation Framework

**Measuring Impact**

11. As DFID’s current Research Strategy points out: “The true test of research is whether people use it – for reference, for influence and, most importantly, for change”. Using this as a starting point, the
evaluation adopted a broad framework to capture the effects of ICHRP’s work at multiple levels. Based on an adaptation of the ‘Dimensions of Change’ Model which has been used in the international field by both development and human rights organisations, the framework aimed to capture the effects of ICHRP’s work on individuals, organisations and governments. The evaluation did not go beyond standard definitions for the key terms ‘impact’ and ‘influence’ (see Abbreviations and Acronyms) which refer to the notion of one thing having ‘an effect’ of some kind on another. Likewise, the term ‘policy’ bears its ordinary meaning that is a plan of action by an individual or organisation, while the term ‘public policy’ refers to the policies of governments. Giving these terms their normal meaning (the TOR did not give definitions) allowed for a wide prospectus enabling the recognition of impacts of all types.

12. There are numerous challenges to measuring the impact of policy research:

- It is difficult to define what counts as impact; what would be seen as impact for one person, may not be seen as impact for another. Any measurement scale is likely to be arbitrary. The development community has made some headway in this tricky area over the past decade, with many agencies embracing the idea that impact is subjective in its nature and consequently defining it as ‘lasting and significant change, positive or negative, as defined by the person or people affected by the change’.

- The policy process itself consists of a complex interaction of diverse factors, making it difficult to draw any direct or robust links between activities and changes in policy (let alone practice). Attribution vs. contribution will often be contestable. Classical models of causality that tend to be linear (A leads to B leads to C) are not helpful.

The idea of ‘measuring’ impact is thus unfeasible. More fruitful and informative is to describe the impacts by collecting the views of a representative variety of stakeholders involved in the Council’s work and seeing what patterns and threads emerge. The evaluation gives a qualitative view of the impact of ICHRP’s work rather than measuring the scale of impact or showing its totality. It focuses on asking what difference ICHRP has made to the thinking and actions of individuals, or the policies of organisations and governments.

**Model of Impact**

13. The model of impact used in this evaluation (see Diagram 1) is premised on these considerations as well as the remit of ICHRP itself. The Council is a “forum for applied research” which aims to “inform discussion of human rights policy”. Its mission statement stipulates that policy-makers at all levels are within its purview:

“It produces research reports and briefing papers with policy recommendations. These are brought to the attention of policy-makers, within international and regional organisations, in governments and intergovernmental agencies, and in voluntary organisations of all kinds.”

14. Although the evaluation TOR require a consideration of the influence and impact of ICHRP’s work, the Council itself does not use those words in its mandate and the correct understanding of its precise aims and mission vis-à-vis policy makers remain the subject of some ongoing internal discussion (these matters are discussed further in Part B, section 4). The evaluation uses a framework which sets out a typical understanding of how a civil society organisation like the ICHRP may influence individuals, organisations and governments. The diagram illustrates how ICHRP’s influence on government policy in particular can take a more direct route to key decision-makers or be mediated through other actors. In this respect, although the evaluation model acknowledges all levels of influence and policy-making, it places particular emphasis on influencing public policy, reflecting the primary responsibility of States parties in making and maintaining human rights standards.
15. This model of impact takes account of the fact that public policy-making is complex, organic, dynamic and above all, a political process in which it is very rarely possible to establish direct causal connections between the activities of single external bodies and any particular policy. For any given policy change or initiative there will be a constellation of social and political circumstances and a range of influences, national and international, economic and sociological at work. The question of influence on public policy is no doubt difficult for bodies such as the ICHRP to answer and it is unrealistic to expect the Council to be able to prove it has had a single-handed impact upon the external environment. Nonetheless, this does not mean that projects cannot be designed to achieve such influence, or to ensure that the internal environment optimises the way the Council works and its chances of conjoining effectively with others to exercise influence on the wider world. The evaluation model thus recognises the significance of internal factors within organisations such as ICHRP, that is, its mission, management, staffing, organisation and processes. It is these that determine the way it goes about its business and its ability to have an influence.

2.3. Evaluation Methodology

2.3.1 Linkages

16. The evaluation methodology is based on the model of impact described above and explores the influence of ICHRP’s work at the following levels:
2.3.2 Research Projects

17. The evaluation TOR required a focus “on several of the Council’s recent research projects including some that the ICHRP considers to have been effective and at least one that it considers to have been less effective”. This was discussed at the initial meeting with DFID and ICHRP. ICHRP highlighted the following six reports issued since 2006: ‘Climate Change’; ‘Corruption’; ‘Peace Agreements’; ‘Terrorism’; ‘Sexuality’; ‘Human Rights Standards’ and gave an assessment of their relative impacts. The ‘Climate Change’ and ‘Corruption’ reports were described as having “exceptional impact” whereas the impacts of ‘Peace Agreements’, ‘Terrorism’ ‘Human Rights Standards’ were less clear, and ‘Sexuality’ was too new to ascertain its effects. On the basis of this discussion, the ‘Climate Change’, ‘Corruption’ ‘Peace Agreements’ and ‘Terrorism’ reports were selected as they comprised a representative cross-section of the ICHRP’s output in terms of nature, content and perceived impact and effectiveness. It was decided that other Council reports would also be covered as and when they arose in discussions.

2.3.3 Respondents

18. The evaluation targeted three main categories of stakeholders: staff and board/council; targets and users; and donors. It was guided in its selection of respondents by ICHRP which proposed lists of key informants and also opened up its database of contacts to the evaluation team. The evaluation team did not verify impacts among people who were not already directly connected with ICHRP (e.g. human rights community at large); this would not only be impractical but also indiscreet. Reliance on ICHRP contacts inevitably brought a bias in favour of positive feedback but it also meant that the views of such respondents carried particular weight especially where improvements are suggested. The methodology sought to mitigate the risk of bias in the sample by ensuring that the team approached not only informants proposed by ICHRP but also users randomly selected from ICHRP databases by the team itself.

2.3.4 Ethical Standards

19. Ethical standards relating to confidentiality, impartiality and objectivity were built into the methodological design. The rigour and the independence of the process was assured by enabling team members to cross-check the evidence collected – questionnaire responses were reviewed by all team members; interviews largely involved two team members, or were formally recorded in writing by Coffey International Development (Coffey) (for confidential reference by the team) if only one team member was involved. This approach also mitigated the risk of non-completion of the evaluation, due to unforeseen factors such as loss of team members and by keeping an ‘institutional memory’ of data collected.
2.3.5 Methods

20. The evaluation used a variety of evaluation techniques to explore the views of ICHRP stakeholders. This section provides an overview of the methods used (see Appendix A for table giving a detailed breakdown of the interview/questionnaire methodology used, the groups targeted and the level of response).

Documentary Review

21. This covered background materials provided by ICHRP relating to project design and internal planning and review; DFID and FINNIDA strategy and dissemination documents; and other documents researched by the team (See Appendix D). The evaluation relies on new data generated through other methodologies and documents were used for verification purposes only.

Interviews

22. This comprised both face-to-face and phone interviews of 41 persons in total:

- **Face-to-face interviews** of stakeholders from DFID, ICHRP, FINNIDA and key informants proposed by ICHRP. Two team members visited Geneva at the start of the evaluation (13-15 September 2009), accompanied by DFID, and carried out 11 interviews with ICHRP staff and Geneva-based external informants proposed by ICHRP. The team also met other key stakeholders in London from DFID, ICHRP and FINNIDA.

- **Phone interviews - Project-based interviews** - 20 key informants (five per research project) were selected from lists of key informants for each project provided by ICHRP. The interviews were structured around the long evaluation questionnaire (see below) and carried out by individual team members. Coffey kept a formal record of discussions which were used in conjunction with the evaluator’s personal notes when conducting the analysis. Setting up the phone interviews took considerable efforts by the evaluation team, Coffey and ICHRP but proved to be a productive methodology for obtaining detailed responses.

- **Board/former staff and consultants** - Eight interviews with current board/council members and former staff were carried out. These interviews did not follow a set format, but explored how the Council was functioning as well as perceptions of usage, impact and quality.

Questionnaires

23. Questionnaires were used extensively as a way of opening up the consultation to a cross-section of stakeholders and 52 responses were received. They took a semi-structured form and explored the quality, usage and impact of ICHRP reports, as well as factors affecting its work and broader learning. Two versions of the questionnaire were created (long and short) and disseminated to different groups of respondents in a variety of formats (long questionnaire; user enquiry; e-alert; distribution enquiry; and miscellaneous and ad hoc email enquiries – see Appendix A for details of responses and Appendix G for the evaluation instruments). Distribution took place in the course of September by email with personally addressed follow-up reminders and flexible deadlines. The questionnaire methodology was much expanded compared to the original evaluation plan: the team had intended to distribute the questionnaire to a sample of 80 recipients only (20 per report) but upon starting the evaluation realised that this would not make for a representative sample as the reports under review had been distributed very widely (e.g. the terrorism report was sent to 1,911 people). This necessitated two adaptations to the methodology:

- The sample was expanded to ensure a fair and representative coverage of ICHRP users. The team made a random sample of at least 10% of users for each of the four reports under review; added in an open invitation to all ICHRP users through the e-alert system; and sent targeted personalised enquiries to all donors, board members and key informants.

- Replies were encouraged by adapting the questionnaire format to the needs of different groups. As the long questionnaire might be considered off-putting, it was only sent to those closely associated with ICHRP (staff, board and council). The majority of recipients, 99%,
received a short email version which allowed people to respond to a few questions listed in the body of the email itself.

Internet Research

24. This methodology was used to help identify potential good practices/learning which could be useful to the ICHRP in its future work on influencing policy and measuring impacts. The Google search engine was used in various ways for citation analysis e.g. number of hits per each project title, number of hits per subject area to see if ICHRP featured on the first page of results, comparisons with reports issued by other organisations on similar subjects etc. This proved to be a crude tool for assessing impact often producing vast numbers of unwieldy and insufficiently filtered results. Aside from showing that ICHRP’s works are cited, this method did not give a credible sense of impacts and its results are reported little here.

Evaluation Team Peer Review of Quality

25. In addition to assessing the views of users through interviews and questionnaires, the team was asked to make its own peer assessment of the four research reports. The added value of having what would be a subjective assessment by the team on quality was debated at the initial meeting but found to have merit for two reasons: users were unlikely to comment on all facets of quality as the team would be able to do; and secondly, it would help develop a methodology for assessing quality which could be used by ICHRP in due course (as standardised quality control processes were emerging as a question in early research). A research quality assessment matrix provided by DFID and derived from a World Bank format was used and the conclusions of the team analysis are in Appendix B, and also referred to in the body of this report.

Other Organisations

26. Representatives from organisations engaged in similar work were consulted either by phone or email to discuss the challenges of influencing policy and measuring impacts, as well as good practices, tools and tips relating to those processes. The aim of this consultation was to give practical pointers to ICHRP for the way forward. Some 11 individuals provided inputs.

2.3.6 Summary

27. As a result of these various efforts, the team invited some 6,020 people to contribute to the evaluation and targeted approximately 490 persons individually and directly. The evaluation received 104 responses (some 70 % of whom were external users.) The response rate on the questionnaire methodology was extremely low (mostly less than 1%) especially when compared to the response rate observed by the consultants in other similar exercises. This could reflect a poor underlying level of engagement of ICHRP and its stakeholders or potential respondents may have found the evaluation questionnaire onerous or otherwise unsuitable for capturing their views - in order to mitigate this risk, virtually all stakeholders (99%) received the short email version. In any event, the team was satisfied that the culmination of efforts had resulted in a sufficient gathering of information to provide for a well-founded analysis; it was not deemed necessary to extend the evaluation to carry out further research activities or country visits. The methodology yielded substantial data and the team had to prioritise its analysis and the presentation of its findings due to time and report limitations (30 substantive pages) set out in the TOR.

3 FINDINGS

3.1 User Views

28. The evaluation took as its centrepiece the views of users on the quality and impact of ICHRP work. The analysis contained in this section is based on the feedback of external users; the views of ICHRP staff/board/Council members are used for verification purposes only. The 70 or so users who contributed were either identified by ICHRP on the key informants lists or respondents to the team’s email questionnaires. Users gave views on three aspects: quality, impact and the institution as a
whole. They mainly referred to the four reports under review but also other reports (although the ‘Sexuality’ and ‘Standard-setting’ reports were rarely mentioned by informants and thus do not appear in this analysis).

3.1.1 Quality

29. ICHRP reports often win high accolades; the ‘Climate Change’, ‘Corruption’ and ‘Peace’ reports were frequently described in terms such as “outstanding”, or “excellent”. The ‘Terrorism’ report does not afford the same level of praise. Earlier Council reports mentioned for their overall quality include, ‘Business and Human Rights’ (still seen as a seminal work), ‘Human Rights and National Institutions’, ‘Non-state Actors’ and ‘Local Government’.

Topics

30. ICHRP is seen as very current in its choice of subjects, and effective at spotting emerging issues. One person summed it up as “a boutique supplying tomorrow’s ideas”. There is a sense that the topics are well chosen, the reports are “not frivolously topical, not just latest flavour of the month...they are real issues”. Although the reports in themselves can be relevant and cutting edge, respondents from both government and NGO circles were sometimes ambivalent as to whether ICHRP’s work overall was as pertinent as it could be to government agendas (one respondent spoke of the need to ensure products “pressed buttons in capitals”) or fully in tune with the needs of the NGO community, “ICHRP needs to be more in touch with the priorities of the [human rights] movement”.

What Users Say About ‘Topics’

Climate Change - “the first true and still most comprehensive document of its kind”, “exploring new challenges in a responsible and serious way”.

Corruption - respondents felt this offered new angles, seeing corruption as a violation of human rights rather than the traditional human rights lens of criminal justice standards.

Peace and Terrorism - respondents generally saw these as topics worthy of attention.

Analysis

31. There was usually little comment on the quality of the analysis, and the feedback given tended to be in the form of general praise for the Council’s “solid research” and an appreciation of its ability to bring an informed and unbiased presence to human rights discourse. The multi-disciplinary nature of its analysis, “it includes law but is not that limited to it” bringing in ‘broader approaches’ and ‘political, economic and cultural dynamics’ is welcome. Academics found the reports to be up to university standards. The unpublished background papers (available online) were also cited as a quality resource. The only report to draw comments for the incompleteness of its analysis was ‘Corruption’ – respondents felt it didn’t get to the “nub of the case” but recognised at the same time that as a first effort in this field, not much more could be expected. ICHRP is currently working on a follow-up report on Corruption designed to complement and enlarge on the issues contained in the earlier report.
What Users Say About ‘Analysis’

**Peace** - “one of the very few referenced works…which… sets out a number of substantive areas …on peace agreements”.

**Climate Change** – brought clarity to a complex area, people knew that there was a link but “inappropriate and legally unsophisticated things were being said”, whereas the report “framed the issue right”.

**Corruption** - “it articulates the main questions but does not get to the nub of the case”, it could have been more of a “hybrid” linking the two fields of human rights and corruption but “whilst it was not holistic and totally balanced, …under the circumstances this was the best product which could have come out”.

**Terrorism** – there were differing views among respondents, some found it a “thoughtful analysis”, others felt it was “too descriptive” and somehow incomplete “failed to get to the important topic of how to talk about the issues”.

Data

32. The use of data was little commented on by users. The originality of ICHRP’s work in pure research terms was occasionally questioned, one stakeholder commenting that ICHRP did not necessarily develop new research but classified and re-ordered what already existed – adding that this was still a “useful” function, “to have a practical package even if there was nothing new”. A number of replies referred to the need for empirical research, “ICHRP needs to take up the challenge of empirical evidence and not shy away from it” or at least use case studies and practical examples. Such comments were often made in relation to the ‘Climate Change’ report. The ‘Corruption’ study was also felt to be too reliant on anecdotal information, although no other organisation to date has tackled the question of empirical data on human rights and corruption either.

Output

33. The quality of the final product is perhaps the main area where respondents called for improvements. Interviewees commented on the style of writing, the “reports are too wordy” or “dense” and lack overall reader-friendliness – font size, lay out, sign-posting, markers, graphics, boxes, statistics, paragraph numbering and so on. Such criticisms were common-place but it is also the case that some find ICHRP products accessible. Such respondents were often comparing Council products to law reports, they are “not too ‘law heavy’”, or academic journals, “much better than academic papers…which exclude anyone who is not an expert”, or the outputs of other organisations, one said, “[you] often find that UN documents are not as well written”.

34. Responses to the four reports reflect this mixture of views. The ‘Peace’ report was probably the most accessible but even this had its critics, other reports were easy for specialists but less so for general readers. The lack of ‘house style’ was obvious to respondents who noticed that different people wrote different parts of each report. The ICHRP has produced separate summaries and flyers for recent reports but most people had not seen these (only a couple of comments that the summaries were useful). The limited availability of ICHRP reports in other languages was noted.
35. The style of ICHRP products can be a barrier for a variety of audiences, even researchers said they did not have time to read ICHRP reports and one academic found the material too complicated for university students, “the challenge of being an insider human rights think tank is that the price is not being accessible outside”. Respondents were mostly concerned, however, that ICHRP products are unsuitable for policy-makers, the “format output is not the most conducive to speak to policy-makers….it is too long and dense”. They recognised the importance of ICHRP retaining its “academic, nuanced approach” but felt reports should be combined with “more targeted policy briefs, which would provide clearer recommendations for action”. In fact, the need for a stronger policy focus and recommendations was a common observation both by government and NGO contributors. The reports seem to take the discussion so far and then fall short of clear conclusions and directions people are looking for, “[the] reports don’t give clear messages, it is important to show the way forward….to show a way out of deadlock, not just two or three different points of view.”. It was a common critique of all reports, frequently made of the ‘Climate Change’ report and a particular frustration for readers of the ‘Terrorism’ report. The ‘Peace’ and ‘Corruption’ reports attracted fewer comments in this vein. One NGO respondent summed up what many seem to say, “the [Council] needs to take up practical programmes as well as philosophical questions”.

What Users Say About ‘Policy Focus’

‘Climate Change’ - “ripe for more concrete policy recommendations which could have helped”, “it was very academic, the arguments very complex…but it didn’t help go through options”, “the practical application is not there”.

‘Terrorism’ - “it didn’t provide a constructive way forward”, e.g. by looking at human rights friendly counter terrorism strategies. Another said the ICHRP was courageous in taking up this issue but that it didn’t do a “particularly strong job”, some of the background papers were good but “the lexicon was not well addressed….it didn’t really get to the topic of how to talk about it”.

‘Peace’ - “It was stellar” said one, “but I find it difficult to apply it in my work”. 
Summary

36. In addition to assessing user views, the team was asked to make its own peer assessment of the four research reports and used a DFID research assessment matrix (adapted from a World Bank format) to do so. The evaluation team’s peer review is set out in Appendix B. The peer review looked at the quality of the research from an analytical perspective – focusing on the analysis, the use of evidence, the structure, clarity and logic of the arguments, the writing style, the ability to ‘build a case’, and so on. These factors are important in judging the value of a report in terms of its content; so that policy is based on good thinking rather than attractive – but inadequately thought through – argument. The peer review was different to the assessment made by users as the team read the reports in detail and assessed them against a detailed research matrix; the users by contrast did not have sufficient knowledge of the reports to comment on each of the criteria listed in the research quality matrix but tended to value the reports for other reasons e.g. such as resonance with their own views, new ideas, specific new knowledge, food for thought, practical support or advice, etc. Moreover, team members brought a number of experiences in policy, academia and publications which influenced their assessment and also read the reports from the point of view of a general human rights readership rather than specialists in any of the four subjects under review. The difference in approach meant that the report could be rated highly on criteria of importance to users whilst not scoring well on the research matrix/‘analytical’ criteria or vice versa. As a result, although, the trend of feedback from users generally accorded with the team’s peer review of quality, the team was markedly more rigorous in identifying weaknesses and areas for improvement.

37. The team agreed with users that selected topics are relevant; some are of immense global significance while others are of importance to a more discreet set of audiences. The team noted more issues with the analysis as compared to users: inconsistencies and loopholes e.g. unanswered questions or overarching theoretical and conceptual frameworks which vary in clarity and comprehensiveness. None of the reports explore gender as fully as they could; some make very scant references to gender while others tackle the issue but miss important aspects. The team agreed with users about the need for more empirical data: ICHRP could make better use of existing statistics, case studies, practical experiences etc. to bring its reports to life; and also be more imaginative in commissioning new data. Both the team and users were in accord about the necessity to improve output quality in terms of layout, design, writing style and general reader-friendliness. On policy focus, the team found that the reports to be good food for thought but lacking practical ideas for concrete action by policy-makers. It was often suggested to the team that this would come in follow-up reports but looking across the portfolio of work produced in the four year timeframe under review, ICHRP’s work did not have the ‘practical relevance’ alluded to paragraphs introducing the Council and its work. Overall, the team concurred with users on the importance of the topics, the need for sharper policy focus and improved output quality but identified more areas where the analysis and use of data could be tightened up. The scores given by the team to individual reports are in Appendix B. On the basis of this scoring, ‘Peace’ and ‘Terrorism’ emerge as of higher quality than ‘Corruption’ and ‘Climate Change’ mainly for reasons of output quality.

3.2 Impact

38. The evaluation explored how ICHRP reports had impacted individual users, organisations or governments working at national or inter-governmental level. The TOR also asked the evaluation to enquire into how stakeholders ‘use’ ICHRP reports. The distinction between ‘use’ and ‘impact’ is not always clear-cut e.g. if someone distributes ICHRP reports is that an indicator of an activity only or an example of impact (because ICHRP’s work has influenced a person enough to want to share this knowledge further)? Since the activities described are at a secondary level by users, and not primary activities by ICHRP itself, they are taken as indicators of influence and impact. The concepts of usage and impact were kept separate for the purposes of the research (in line with the TOR) but are now merged in this analysis.
3.2.1 Individual Level Impacts

39. Most people said they had read at least one of ICHRPs reports in full; at either end of this spectrum were people who never read any of the reports (including key stakeholders who said they only read summaries, if those) or people who described themselves as “avid readers” of all the Council’s products. Individuals report using the reports in the following ways:

- **Self-Development** – People said that ICHRPs work had deepened their understanding of human rights, with some actively seeking out its work to “keep myself up to date on major human rights challenges…” The ‘Corruption’ report, “made things clearer and brought in new perspectives”, helping to identify entry points and litigation strategies. ‘Climate Change’ enhanced people’s knowledge, it was the “first significant research study on this issue and it advanced my thinking…considerably”.

- **Source of Arguments** – People reach for ICHRPs reports when they need to argue a case; the reports are useful in “articulating more cogent and convincing arguments when such issues are debated within my own organisation”. They can help verify personal assumptions based on experience, or prepare for more formal advocacy before parliaments and courts or dialogue with policy-makers, and practitioners.

- **Basis for Research/Analysis** – ICHRPs reports are used as source documents by academics and cited in scholarly publications. The work is also used in analysis. For example, one person drew on the ‘Sexuality’ report when preparing for an evaluation of a sexual and reproductive health project, another to appraise funding proposals on specialist areas.

- **Academic Teaching** – ICHRPs reports are used for teaching, lecturing, and writing by individual academics in centres such as Essex University and Rutgers University. The ‘Corruption’ report has made its way into syllabuses e.g. reading material for a regional postgraduate diploma on corruption issues by the University of Chile. ‘Climate Change’ was also mentioned in this context. Some older ICHRPs reports continue to have life in this way, ICHRPs report ‘Beyond Voluntarism’ has been used for many years by one respondent as a basis for discussions on corporate responsibility.

- **Facilitating Discussions** – One person said ICHRPs reports are “amazingly useful” primers, “a shorthand way of getting everyone, whether a group of students, officials, lawyers up to speed on issue so that an issue can be discussed”. The ‘Climate Change’ report was used in this way, and shared as links and references at meetings of policy-makers, lawyers and NGOs.

- **Distribution** – Close collaborators of the Council often distribute the reports further by email to a limited circle of counterparts. The e-alert responses uncovered some interesting examples of dissemination such as a radio station in Paraguay (Radio Viva) which uses ICHRPs reports in its broadcasts on citizen participation in public policy building; individuals who post ICHRPs reports on blogs such as Natural Resource E-forums or send them on to libraries. Mostly though people keep the reports for their personal use unless they were closely involved in the preparation of the reports themselves.

3.2.2 Higher Level Impacts

40. This section analyses the impacts of each of the four reports before commenting on the general patterns and trends emerging from this data.

**Climate Change**

41. The ‘Climate Change’ report has enjoyed much success. The selection of the topic was particularly relevant and of immense global significance. The timing was just right as the report came into being as other initiatives and actors were starting to take a closer look at this issue. It was no doubt greatly assisted by having the support of Mary Robinson who did much to promote the report in influential circles. As a consequence, the impacts of this report can be seen at numerous levels. It fed
into the thinking of other NGOs such as the Global Humanitarian Forum (GHF), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and the World Council of Churches, all of whom acknowledge the contribution made by ICHRP’s report to their own work as well as the personal support provided by ICHRP staff in the development of their own documents. The report was very well received at UN and multilateral level too and provided important groundwork for the development of related documents by the OHCHR and the World Bank.

42. The report synergised well with efforts being made by the Maldives Mission in Geneva to promote discussion of the human dimension of ‘Climate Change’ within the UN Human Rights Council. The discussion in the report about classifying climate change as a human rights violation was helpful in preparing for negotiations and in raising awareness among academics and NGOs. ICHRP was one of a number of other key players (GHF, Ebert Foundation, Realising Rights, Earth Justice, WB, OHCHR, Oxfam, CIEL and others) engaged in this effort to put climate change on the UN human rights agenda. This interests of different organisations were seen to converge, “neither influenced either (to take the issue up)…both happened in parallel” and created a coalition of interest. Other examples of influence include the report being presented to the Swedish Foreign Ministry; the launch and dissemination of the report in DFID which prompted ideas for further research on gender and climate change; and the use of the report as source material by FINNIDA for the “Women and Climate Change” initiative in the upcoming Copenhagen process.

Corruption

43. The corruption project has impacted at numerous levels as a result of strong networking and strategic partnerships. The examples emerging from this project show influence at a deeper level with efforts to implement the ideas contained in it in country policy. At the NGO level, ICHRP’s work helped provide a conceptual basis to Transparency International’s (TI) policy-making and brought it closer to mainstream human rights NGOs. ICHRP was described as an “igniter of discussions”, a catalyst for dialogue and wider partnerships. TI translated the report and distributed it to 90 TI Chapters as well as giving it publicity through email circulars and the website. TI was already taking up human rights at an institutional level when it became of aware of ICHRP’s work, “[both] happened independently but the processes were mutually reinforcing”.

44. Counterparts in UNODC (now in the World Bank) distributed the report widely among multilateral anti-corruption networks and personally handed a copy to the Prime Minister of Albania and the President of Brazil. Whilst causality is difficult to prove, the report has been used as a basis for discussions with key policy-makers (e.g. technical assistance mission to Brazil) and may have played a role in the decision of two bilateral agencies to withdraw support from certain developing countries where there were concerns about ‘illicit enrichment’ provisions violating human rights (as highlighted by the ICHRP process). UNDP has its own experts on ‘Corruption’ and the relationship is seen as more of an “interactive process” with “both influencing each other”. UNDP counterparts say extracts of the report into its own publications for dissemination throughout the organisation.

45. This is the only report to influence government home affairs departments e.g. reported impacts in Mexico (the Mexico City Commission of Human Rights, as well as the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan at Federal government level) and in Chile (National anti-corruption commission has presented the report at meetings). It has also fed into overseas aid programmes, as the “cement” of work carried out under a USAID project in Armenia by Casals Associates who have translated the report into Armenian, launched it at a press conference and distributed it nationally. Casals came upon the ‘Corruption’ report by chance on the internet and forged a fruitful relationship involving visits and technical advice/training by ICHRP. It is still too early to be clear about enduring impacts.

Peace

46. It was more difficult to find evidence of impact for this report, it is an older report for a start and tracing key informants was problematic. The report was initiated and funded by the Swiss government leading to it being used in foreign policy. The Swiss and Norwegian governments organised a high
profile seminar with the King of Norway and 60 ambassadors along with foreign ministers of Switzerland and Norway. Although the evaluation team were unable to explore this example further, the ICHRP author said the language of the report linking human rights with conflict resolution was adopted into speeches and used as a plank for foreign policy, “I have never had such direct policy transfer, it is quite unusual”. The report continues to be actively used by Swiss mediators in North Africa who have recently disseminated hard copies in negotiations in Burundi and Somalia as a basis for discussion. FINNIDA used the report as source material when preparing for the German/Scandinavian conference on peace and justice in Nuremberg.

47. The project prompted some follow up work in OHCHR on gender and peace, looking at practical measures for enhancing the participation of women in peace processes. This resulted in a report on the protection of economic, social and cultural rights post-conflict (but ICHRP is not credited as the author’s earlier works are cited). It was utilised in a more ad hoc way by NGOs. It was well disseminated in the Philippines at forums organised by the South-South Network (SSN) which ICHRP participated in and is thought to have broadened the discussion between government representatives and rebel groups on human rights.

Terrorism

48. This report appears to have had the least impact. It was mainly aimed at the NGO community and probably the human rights NGO community at that. The evaluation team heard that the report helped encourage HRW to address terrorism as a human rights abuse, the organisation was already moving along that path but it assisted with thinking on the issue and urged a greater focus. ICHRP Board members gave examples of how the report was discussed at meetings in New York, or used by the Pacific Community’s Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) to discuss security legislation with Pacific Island governments but generally speaking independent examples of impact were few. Evidence from outsiders about the impact of the report was limited to a single testimony, one organisation and was not supported by documentary evidence. In addition, some respondents questioned the value and usefulness of this report.

Other Reports

49. The team received occasional references to the impact of other reports. One staff member of a UN agency found the ‘Standard-setting’ report a “helpful in-house experience for us to reflect on the role of (our own governance structure) and specifically its conclusions… in the overall evolution of international …law”. The person added that a degree of complacency had set in about these issues and “the engagement with ICHRP proved a welcome opportunity for a fresh discussion”. ICHRP’s work on local government continues to be of relevance. This work is used in Ascuncion municipality in Paraguay for the development of human rights-based indicators, and human rights approaches to public policies and in South Africa, as a framework for dealing with cases before the Constitutional Court on evictions, water meters in Johannesburg city. The Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs has integrated it into a EU manual on the protection on human rights for use by all EU diplomats around the world. SDC find several reports alongside the training and technical support provided by ICHRP useful in defining human rights policies and medium term departmental strategies. ICHRP’s work on ‘National human rights institutions’ was also described as “absolutely illuminating”.

3.2.3 Summary

Type of Impacts

50. Examples of impact are mapped in Table 1 below and show the ICHRP interfacing at all levels from organisations, through to governments and occasionally at the inter-governmental level and can be categorised as follows:

- Raising interest/awareness e.g. DFID launch of ‘Climate’ report.
- Reference material e.g. FINNIDA use of ‘Peace’ report for conference.
- Guidance for staff e.g. EU diplomats manual but no reports of training by external users.
• Stimulant for further research e.g. OHCHR use of ‘Peace’ report.
• Basis for discussions e.g. ‘Peace’ report in negotiations in Africa.
• Technical advice to decision-makers e.g. UNODC/WB advisory missions.
• Decision-making e.g. ‘Corruption’ reported to influence two bilateral aid agencies.
• Background information e.g. various ‘Corruption’ and ‘Climate Change’ examples.
• Development of operational tools such indicators and plans e.g. very limited, reports of examples from Paraguay and Mexico and SDC only.
• Change in formal policy with documentary evidence of decisions – no examples.

51. The table sets out a hierarchy of impacts, ranging from examples of interest (e.g. ICHRP being invited to speak) to stronger evidence of impact where ICHRP has contributed to a change in organisational thought and approach as reflected in documents (bold in the table).

Other observations on the types of impacts include:
• Impacts on NGOs tend to be on specialist NGOs (working on climate change, corruption, peace for example) encouraging them to take more of a human rights perspective rather than on human rights NGOs in terms of broadening their scope. ICHRP is valued by individuals in the human rights community and by other human rights institutions as a neutral space and a provider of food for thought and discussion but the evaluation could not trace policy changes which could be attributed to its work.
• Reports have been taken up by multilateral institutions/UN agencies such as OHCHR, World Bank, UNODC and UNDP. The driver seems to be an interest from individual organisations in the subject area in question rather than across the board partnerships on all subjects and across all UN agencies.
• Impacts are mainly at the international level upon organisations based in Europe rather than in the South.
• There are few visible impacts on government home affairs policies save for the influence of the ‘Corruption’ report in Mexico. There is possibly greater effect on foreign ministries and aid departments; however, this is one step removed from final decision-makers at national level since these foreign missions/aid departments are themselves trying to influence decision-makers. Even here, the most clear-cut cases of direct influence (Maldives mission or Swiss/Norwegian governments) where ICHRP’s work directly fits a pre-existing government agenda. Impacts at inter-governmental level seem to occur in exceptional cases as seen in ICHRP’s work with other actors to bring ‘Climate Change’ to the UN Human Rights Council agenda.
Table 1: Mapping of Impacts of ICHRP Report's

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<th>Corruption</th>
<th>Peace</th>
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<td>Multiple</td>
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<td>Global Humanitarian Forum</td>
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<td>Transparency International</td>
<td>South-South Network (national NGO in Philippines)</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
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<td>Stockholm Environment Institute</td>
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* Bold examples indicate those where ICHRP contribution to changes in organisational thinking are acknowledged either by referencing in relevant documents or by key informants. Non-bold examples indicate interest shown in ICHRP’s work.

** ICHRP contribution to the work at the UN Human Rights Council was alongside numerous other players.

52. Other impact indicators include:

- Invitations to speak, copyright requests, citations in publications. Such indicators are indicative of interest but not policy impact. ICHRP reports are no doubt widely cited but the evaluation could not arrive at a credible assessment of citations on the internet.

- Role in troubleshooting – ‘Terrorism’ was the only example available and users seemed divided about ICHRP’s role in untangling the human rights issues.

- Generation of new knowledge on protecting and promoting human rights. This is not a completely separate indicator and encompasses earlier discussions on the high relevance placed by users on ICHRP ‘Topics’ (see 4.2.1) and impacts at individual and organisational level (see 4.4) The reports are generally credited with shedding light on new areas.

- Broadening the understanding of human rights in the international development arena. This is not a completely separate indicator and is part of the assessment of the impact of ICHRP on
individuals, organisations and government policy (see 3.1.2) which shows that the strength of its contribution varies from report to report.

- Influencing teaching/training – individual academics frequently testify to the usefulness of ICHRP’s work (see 3.1.2.1 but no institutional uses (academic or otherwise) of reports in training.

- Future analyses – the examples above show that the reports have occasionally stimulated further analysis e.g. Peace.

Facilitating Factors

53. Not all ICHRP’s reports have an influence. ‘Climate Change’ and ‘Corruption’ show a marked range of impacts, ‘Peace’ and ‘Terrorism’ impacts are more limited. A closer examination of these impacts yields some interesting lessons. ‘Climate Change’ was a particularly influential piece of work, it caught the mood of the moment, was timely and authoritative. No doubt the support of Mary Robinson, a highly respected and well-connected international figure gave it an enormous boost. Whilst ICHRP can be proud of its achievements with this report, it is inevitable that such moments will be rare, the Council’s work will not usually be on subjects of immense global significance, emerge at exactly the right moment, or enjoy such high level patronage. The ‘Corruption’ report by contrast is a more replicable model of the Council generating impact through strategic partnerships and networking. The report enjoyed deeper impacts than the ‘Climate Change’ report in many ways despite being a subject of more limited and specialised interest. ICHRP seemed passive in its follow-up to the ‘Peace’ report (relying on the donor instead for implementation) and efforts to mobilise people around ‘Terrorism’ were minimal.

54. Achieving influence on others nearly always requires intensive inputs from ICHRP. Even though opportunities to promote the ‘Climate Change’ report came more easily, it is clear that the research director, as in the Corruption project, cultivated these interests and relationships assiduously, offering much follow-up support and advice to interested organisations. Likewise, the ‘Corruption’ report involved technical advice and visits to inter alia Casals in Armenia, and the ‘Peace’ project - interactions and visits to SSN in the Philippines. Even the inclusion of ICHRP’s ‘Local government’ report in the Dutch EU diplomatic manual was due to diligent efforts by ICHRP staff. A change of research director during the research process can have a significant impact on the ability of ICHRP to follow-up; notably both Climate Change and Corruption retained the same research director throughout which shows that staff capacity and continuity can play an important role in creating impacts.

55. Impacts are mainly observed where individuals have been actively involved in the consultation (as peer evaluators or stakeholders). This is true for ‘Climate Change’ NGOs (GHF, SEI and WCC) as well as ‘Corruption’ (TI, UNODC and UNDP). The same is true for the ‘Human rights and local government’ report. The importance of ICHRP’s research process and particularly the consultation mechanisms is further discussed in the following section ‘Internal factors’

56. ICHRP plays the role of contributor rather than agenda setter; it adds to the groundswell of thinking around a certain idea and joins with others to help create the critical mass necessary to mainstream new thinking. Both ‘Climate Change’ and ‘Corruption’ are typical of this. ICHRP’s contribution is typically described as follows: “I would say ICHRP helped make a critical mass…[I would] not say [that it is] ICHRP exclusively which has led to this focus but their activity was an influence”. This highlights the problems of establishing causality and attribution and also some of the sensitivities around claiming impacts on individuals or organisations. It helps to set a realistic bar nonetheless for what type of impact ICHRP should aim for.

57. External factors outside ICHRP’s control can retard the impact of its reports. Inevitably the reports find their way into the distribution systems, decision-making structures and processes of recipient organisations. The evaluation tested out the distribution of ICHRP reports in DFID and FINNIDA and found that not all reports are distributed and those that are, have very limited uptake (Appendix A). ICHRP rarely works directly with decision-makers either in organisations or in governments but with
intermediaries who need to persuade others about ICHRP’s work. DFID for example has a Development Committee of key decision-makers. UNDP is a highly decentralised organisation and its headquarters can only guide its offices round the world.

58. Overall the assessment on impact is almost converse to the team’s peer review of quality. ‘Corruption’ and ‘Climate Change’ have enjoyed the most impacts but scored lower on an objective assessment of quality compared to ‘Peace’ and ‘Terrorism’. (Appendix B). This suggests that relatively minor variations in quality are not the determining factor in whether a report has impact or not, it is rather the ability of a report to be relevant to external agendas. This is not to say that quality is irrelevant, the lack of policy direction was the key reason cited by external users for the poor usage of the ‘Terrorism’ report for example. It is also the case that if ICHRP were involved in writing more controversial or critical reports, then quality might be spotlighted more closely.

**Scale of Impact**

59. The evaluation did not set out to measure the totality of impact but having cast the net so wide, (over 6,000 persons) it may well have captured the main recent impacts of ICHRP’s work. The enquiry has not thrown up any examples which ICHRP itself was unaware of, at organisational and policy level at any rate. The only new information relates to personal usage by individuals. There is always the potential for unknown and unintended effects, both positive and negative, but for the most part, the pattern of impact seems clear.

60. The question thus arises of whether, that despite the evident impacts of individual reports, the scope of impact is sufficient for ICHRP as an institution. Taken over a four year period, the impacts might seem limited considering that these are not single reports produced by lone researchers but by an organisation with human and financial resources and backed by eminent support. The Council is more than an individual report and from that point of view, more might be expected. Whether the scale of impact is sufficient is difficult to answer without a comparable organisation to measure against. What is clear is that the approach and consequently the success of the ‘Corruption’ report, for example, could be multiplied across other projects. One research director acting alone cannot do more but with planning, support and an institutional communications strategy, even that report could have had a wider reach.

3.1.3 Institution

61. Interviewees were very positive about ICHRP and its work. Stakeholders often use superlatives to describe its work, “excellent”, “best quality”, “wonderful”. Staff are very well regarded and were frequently praised for their competence and helpfulness, this was a typical comment made by many, “ICHRP is of the highest level of professionalism: responsive, forthcoming and engaging. Not all our partners are so”.

62. Beyond its immediate operations, ICHRP is seen as having a unique and intrinsic value in human rights discourse by virtue of its governance structure, cutting edge work, consultative process and above all its independence. This was seen as its hallmark and valued by both UN collaborators, who referred to the importance of having a policy institute in Geneva outside the UN which is able to bring “different voices and well researched documents”, as well as key international human rights NGOs who see it as providing a neutral meeting space between governments and NGOs which they themselves are unable to do. The impartiality and objectivity of its work was reiterated by a cross-section of respondents, “the research is not polemical, looks objectively across the spectrum of discussion.” The evaluation team was repeatedly assured of the need for such an organisation, as one NGO respondent put it, “If the Council did not exist, we would have had to invent it.” A mapping study commissioned by DFID confirms that there are few other organisations carrying out applied human rights research outside academia.

63. Whilst most were very positive, there were a minority of contrary views from across the board (both governments and NGOs), which in the view of the evaluation team, merit attention. One government respondent said, it has “no impact on the formation of our policy …it is difficult to speak confidently on behalf of others but my sense is that their work is little known about and of little value in
the development of international human rights policy within the United Nations context…", “……strong impression is that their reports are discussed by a few informed academics but have no practical value”. This respondent summed up the ICHRP as having “minimal impact” and that “[they] need a major change in focus and purpose if they are to have serious relevance”. These views are supported by other information received by the team; some missions in Geneva had not heard of ICHRP at all, others reported that even the climate change report had probably only been read by one or two, and then only the summary.

64. An NGO stakeholder also expressed disappointment, “ICHRP had great potential but was often disappointed or proven wrong…often left wondering what is its mission and research agenda. It does not seem coherent and hovers between a generalist and expert approach”. The person “was sceptical of [ICHRP’s] ability to provide relevant and innovative research in complicated legal, normative and political territories”. The team came across a lack of awareness of ICHRP’s work in its enquiries e.g. persons contacted from other human rights and development organisations for good practice material had almost never heard of ICHRP. Moreover, a donor who expressed an unwillingness to fund ICHRP said, “…ICHRP produces research in a vacuum – it is not really tied with any practical policy outcomes, recommendations or follow through, either directly by ICHRP or through careful dissemination of reports to those who need them as tools”.

65. Although these opinions may come across as harsh, they resonate with a common recognition among well-wishers and supporters of the Council that it lacks recognition and visibility, “Many key players are either not aware of the work of ICHRP or do not keep abreast of their contemporaneous work”. Another added, that it is still a “‘clubby type of operation’ which has not met its potential in terms of policy relevance for government or NGOs”.

66. The common theme to all these points is that ICHRP needs to make itself more relevant, visible and known as an institution, particularly to policy-makers. Whilst it may produce individual reports which are of quality and have some impacts, it is only “as good as its last three reports” which is a precarious situation to be in particularly in a world of increasingly competitive donor funding. ICHRP needs to think of itself as more than individual reports if it is to live up to the potential and importance of its mandate. The next section will look at how the internal organisation and workings of the ICHRP can be strengthened to help meet this challenge.

4 INTERNAL FACTORS

67. This section will look at the internal functioning of ICHRP to consider what is working well, and what can be improved with a view to addressing the emerging conclusions from the last section that ICHRP needs to achieve greater visibility and recognition for its work particularly from policy-makers. This first part takes stock of the research process overall to consider which stages work well before going on to examine a number of cross-cutting organisational issues. This section is based on the team’s assessment after talking to stakeholders rather than an objective presentation of user views.

4.1 Research Process

68. The research cycle moves through a number of stages, and whilst it might not be possible to guarantee success for any ICHRP project, failure is predictable, unless each stage of the process is working to its optimum level. Topic identification is the first step and appears to work well given the general perception among users that ICHRP is producing relevant work. Topics are discussed at Council meetings and the Board makes a final selection. The engagement of all parts of the institution at this stage seems to pay dividends. There are some questions over whether ICHRP topic selection could better harmonise with government agendas but given that ICHRP is seeking to identify topics which are not yet on the table, there will inevitably be some degree of second-guessing.

69. Planning and preparation involves a desk review of existing literature and an identification of relevant experts and partners. A ‘design’ document setting out the aims, objectives, methodology,
deliverables and stakeholders is produced by the secretariat for approval by the Board. This is potentially a highly valuable management tool allowing for a degree of corporate standardisation as well as clarity about aims, plans and targets. Unfortunately, the design documents are underdeveloped especially as regards targeting and promotion. Much greater priority and project management methodology could be accorded to the preparation and detailing of these documents and to their systematic maintenance and updating (taking account for example of the removal of uncertainties which are bound to surround the early project inception phases).

70. The implementation of the research then seems to take diverse paths depending on the project in hand. Some reports are mostly written by ICHRP staff (e.g. 'Climate Change'), others are written by consultants, and sometimes involve several researchers working on different parts. All projects are required to carry out an open consultation process which engages key experts and stakeholders through the establishment of an advisory board, and wider email solicitation of views on draft reports. This process aids not only quality control but also influence and effectiveness because it helps build interest, engagement and a sense of shared ownership. The consultation process is a positive feature of ICHRP’s work, and can be a key factor in leading to the types of impacts described in the previous section - people involved in the production of the ‘Corruption’ report, for example, said it was the opportunity to debate rather than the report itself which caused them to change their views and take action. Two aspects could further enhance the consultation function:

- The selection of persons for consultation meetings merits further attention. Given the ramifications for follow-up and impact at later stages, the selection of the ‘right’ persons is paramount. The projects seem to diverge considerably in terms of who they bring on board: the ‘Corruption’ report engaged a number of key players which directly translated into follow-up support and dissemination of the ICHRP’s work but the other reports seem to miss important stakeholders e.g. UNHCR was missing from ‘Peace’, ‘Terrorism’ was said to have too many lawyers involved and ‘Climate Change’ could have done with more ‘informed participants’ at its meetings. A critical gap is the need for more government stakeholders if ICHRP is to have more relevance to public policy though it is noted that previous efforts e.g. ‘Standard-setting’ have not always had much success. On the management of consultation meetings, some felt ICHRP did well, “I think ICHRP manage [consultation] better than most” but others felt that more direction was needed.

- The circulation of the draft for wider consultation appears inefficient. The process requires much effort (it may take many days to identify appropriate persons in ICHRP databases which are in something of a disorganised state, send individual requests to hundreds of individuals and follow-up reminders) for a minimal response, leading to what some call the ‘myth of consultation’. The evaluation team have lived this experience having been through exactly the same process. The idea of wide consultation is very important but more efficient methods should be found. The evaluation team found distribution through e-alerts relatively cost-effective (see Appendix A) and other web-based methods (e.g. blogs, online consultations, web surveys etc.) would open up consultation in a more efficient way leaving more time for targeted efforts and face-to-face engagement with critical experts and policy-makers. It should be noted that ICHRP has already taken some steps in this direction as some reports are placed on the web and are theoretically open to global comment. The aim of the process should be to achieve active engagement through a process of assiduous targeting and ongoing individual communication, not simply mass emailing to supposed consultees.

71. Quality control comes near the end of the process and even though the Executive Director, Board and Advisory Groups all play a part in this, there is no standardised approach. The existing mechanism may work well for a substantive quality check on thematic issues but not so well for editorial quality. Respondents observed that, “the quality of ICHRP research has declined substantially over the last five years”, another added, “… I would be reading a report which has really insightful analysis on one page, and then followed by something as glib as would be expected from a tabloid newspaper”. ICHRP would benefit from a further in-house process to assess quality using the
type of quality assessment tool used by the team (Appendix B) and the production of clear “house standards” regarding length and accessibility. Quality control needs to be present throughout the process to address issues like structure, analysis, logical argument, evidence etc. which are difficult to address right at the end.

72. The final stage of the process, dissemination and promotion of ICHRP’s work is no doubt the weakest and probably for the low levels of visibility of ICHRP beyond its immediate network. Again at this stage, there are significant differences in approach between projects with individual research directors left with considerable freedom to determine effective follow-up. Examples of vigorous promotion by individual staff (e.g. ‘Corruption’) exist but such activity is sporadic and not part of a properly constructed communications plan. More than one respondent laid the blame squarely at the ICHRP’s door, criticising what they saw as an un-strategic dissemination with little account taken of key targets: “It’s a scatter-gun approach and the barrels are always pointed in the same direction”.

4.2 Cross-Cutting Issues

4.2.1 Governing Council

73. The governance structure of ICHRP includes a Council of 24 persons selected on the basis of human rights expertise, regional/national, gender and professional diversity (though it tends to be dominated by lawyers). The Council usually meets once a year but did not meet at all in one recent year. According to some, Council meetings could be better organised and attended but nonetheless, the wise choice of projects is attributed by some to the inputs of the Council. Thereafter, engagement of Council members tails off substantially, a few may be involved from time to time in consultations over particular reports, but members are rarely engaged in promotion or follow-up of ICHRP’s report (Mary Robinson’s promotion of ICHRP’s report, as an ex-Council member, was an exceptional intervention). There is a problem of non-engagement: the Secretariat says Council members are too busy and never respond, on the other side Council members may feel they are not contacted and feel uncertain about their role. The Secretariat is aware of the need to engage Council members more and is considering ways of enhancing Council participation.

74. Council members are a rich resource who can play an immensely valuable role as ‘ambassadors’ in the promotion of ICHRP’s work and in acting as a bridge to important decision-makers, especially at national level - governments, NGOs, universities and the like. The evaluation team do not feel however, that an overall enlargement in the size of the Council is the answer. The first step must be greater priority and resources devoted to engaging Council members and to ensuring that the current governing Council is properly supported. In the long-term if these efforts do not succeed, it may be necessary to review selection criteria (to place greater emphasis on availability and commitment to provide support to ICHRP) or consider alternative governance models.

75. One aspect meriting more immediate consideration is the need to draw in more government experience. The lack of impact at public policy level seems partly due to gaps in the composition of the Council, whose members are largely distinguished by eminent service outside government rather than within it, as one respondent put it “The Board needs to think beyond the NGO perspective but its current membership doesn’t really equip it to do that – where are the former Permanent Secretaries and former Home Affairs Ministers?” Adding senior government experience to the Council/Board would help create a better overall balance likely to enable the body to fulfil its strategic role even more effectively.

4.2.2 Internal Organisation

76. ICHRP’s work is geared towards the production of its reports, which are seen as the life blood and raison d’etre of the organisation. Work is organised around individual reports - specific reports are designated to research directors who, subject to seeking Board approval about the topic selection and preliminary design at the start and publication at the end, have a considerable degree of autonomy in the interim to develop the project in the way they see fit. The Executive Director is closely involved,
particularly when it comes to finalisation of drafts. In recent times, research directors have sought to break out of these ‘silos’ and improve coordination amongst themselves. The following aspects of internal organisation merit consideration:

- **Institutional memory** - with projects so dependent on one individual, projects are frequently thrown into disarray when staff leave, “one research director goes, the whole thing gets thrown into turmoil”. The high turnover of research directors in recent years has been very detrimental to the organisation and resulted in the non-completion of several projects.

- **Corporate approach and identity** - apart from the lack of a systemised approach which comes through the discussions above, the research directors rather than ICHRP can end up receiving the recognition for the work that is done. One telling example which brings home this point is when the evaluation team contacted a person for interview from the ICHRP ‘key informants’ list; the person insisted they had never heard of ICHRP and never had any contact with it. Eventually when the evaluation team mentioned the name of the author, recognition was instant and the person commented that the report in question was “fabulous”. ICHRP has been generous to its research staff in allowing them to develop their interests and research e.g. allowing publication of follow-up work in their own names - but this may come at too high a price for ICHRP in terms of its visibility, recognition factor and ultimately funding.

- **Efficacy** - the overall organisational structure and division of labour deserves consideration for various reasons: to ensure cost-effectiveness (management and administration costs e.g. salary rates and rental charges could benefit from benchmarking against rates paid by other NGOs both in Geneva and elsewhere); some key functions are under-represented including communications, monitoring and evaluation, fund-raising, and project management; roles require more clarity and rationalisation - the title of ‘Director’ for example is prolific for such a small organisation. The creation of the potential new post of Deputy Director needs to take into account impacts on existing posts and how it can cover significant organisational gaps in communications, project management and coordination.

- **Diversification** - the Council has become very focused on producing single issue reports and may benefit from diversifying its activities. ICHRP’s reports should be seen and branded as flagship annual events but diversification could bring greater visibility and dissemination as well as greater possibilities of funds. Interviewees recommended a number of ways it might diversify:
  
  - use its convening power to provide space for discussion (without a report) more often (the meeting on Universal Jurisdiction was seen as a success and this format will be used for the upcoming Colloquium on the Global Economy and human rights);
  - produce policy briefs on human rights issues; act as a bridge between academia and the policy community;
  - be a capacity building resource for policy-makers especially around the UN Human Rights Council (it was suggested that there is a gap in Geneva for a think tank which ICHRP could easily fill);
  - provide a respite for human rights activists to reflect on their experiences;
  - reinvigorate the Wilson Cat seminars (a series of open seminars held in Geneva for the human rights community) especially around key moments in the human rights calendar to help ensure attendance.

- **Sustainability** – The current system does not allow for past research projects to be sustained. It is true that staying with topics would limit ICHRP’s ability to move onto new ones but the current approach is leading to the loss of a rich body of work which remains relevant to this day e.g. the ‘Peace’ report could be used in emerging negotiations. One respondent involved in a previous ICHRP report said there was a time lag in impact, as she only received invitations to speak 3-4 years after the release of the report. It would be desirable to find
some way either through partnerships and handover or through internal organisation to keep past reports alive.

77. This discussion raises many issues of internal organisation which the team is not qualified to advise further on. They resonate with some of the issues identified by an external facilitator in the September 2008 Staff retreat. The evaluation team would suggest that ICHRPs takes a further step in these matters and seek the assistance of a suitably qualified specialist in organisational development to produce an objective analysis (which is not based on current incumbents who may leave - as this report was being written the Executive Director had announced his departure). A reconfiguration of roles to allow for wider cross-organisational coordination and ownership seems important. A specialist could advise on the efficacy of alternate models e.g. hiring a permanent research assistant (instead of relying on solely on interns) for basic research tasks, having one head of research only overseeing research fellows working on specific projects (more efforts to better categorise posts such as Research Directors could lead to both cost and management efficiencies). Hiring a specialist to advise on these issues may have cost implications in itself and as this report was finalised during a transition period, the arrival of a new Executive Director may in itself provide an opportunity for the new head of the organisation to consider these structural issues.

78. In addition, and as a way of supplementing the secretariat, the Board may wish to broaden its membership to include specialised management skills. Board members are already selected on the basis of having senior management experience but may be worth including experts in areas such as fund-raising, communications, or organisational development – such people may not be eminent in human rights per se, but can bring added value to a small organisation which may not have all these skills in-house.

4.2.3 Funding

79. The emphasis on independent research guides ICHRPs fundraising for its work; its ability to select topics by itself free from imposition by donors is central to what it is and what it does. This can lead to a precarious existence and recent years have been difficult for a number of reasons:

- ICHRPs relies on obtaining some level of core funding (currently available from DFID, FINNIDA and others) in order to work in this way. Such funding is hard to come by and many organisations, including research institutes like the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), do not get any at all.
- ICHRPs work falls between different stools (not human rights advocacy, or development, or humanitarian, for example) and does not readily meet donor criteria.
- Donors increasingly want to see the impacts of projects especially on policy-makers. DFIDs Civil Society Challenge Fund which provides funds of up to £500,000 over five years for small NGOs requires applicants to show how their proposal will lead to changes in government policy. Academic funders are starting to require academic institutions to show evidence of impact in applications of funding and even membership-based organisations like Amnesty (which are not dependent on institutional donors) are placing increasing weight on the measurement of impact in response to such pressures.

80. ICHRPs appears vulnerable in an increasingly competitive fund-raising environment, as one respondent put it, “[it is] not a given that the Council will survive and thrive”, it “produces excellent quality materials” but needs “to be more visible”. The evaluation team agrees that the reports and the independence of them are central to ICHRPs mission but would encourage ICHRP to open itself up to new sources of funding in a way that does not compromise its independence. The reports should be seen as flagship publications but it could supplement this work in other ways and by so doing, increase its visibility e.g:

- Partnerships with universities to access academic sources of funding.
• Responding to calls for consultancy/research support requested by donors (in fact the Council has responded to such requests before as the ‘Peace’ project was initiated by the Swiss government).

• Solicit funds from large international human rights NGOs who may have a variety of sources of funding themselves e.g. membership fees.

• Look into possibilities for cost recovery when providing support to external organisations e.g. in one case, the evaluation team spoke to an organisation that had received considerable support from ICHRP (pro bono apart from per diems) - the organisation said it would have paid for staff time but was never asked.

These types of alternate funds can be sought for ancillary activities which do not detract from the independence of ICHRP’s primary reports.

81. Finally, maintaining relations with donors (past and present) is key. Past donors are not properly kept up-to-date with ICHRP’s work as the databases are not geared up to enable this. There is clearly much potential for keeping donors better informed and for liaising with them to promote ICHRP’s work.

4.2.4 Mandate/Role

82. ICHRP’s purpose, even though it appears to be formulated in slightly different terms in different publications, stresses the aim of being of “practical relevance to policy-makers in international and regional organisations, in governments and inter-governmental agencies, and in voluntary organisations of all kinds”. There is a difference of opinion within ICHRP as to what this role entails and how passive or active ICHRP should be in its attempts to influence decision-makers. The tension between being a research rather than advocacy organisation was often alluded to, and seemed to be a factor in the lack of emphasis given to communications and follow-up. The evaluation team would make a clear distinction between advocating particular policy positions, and the promotion of ICHRP’s work – the latter is to do with marketing, as one contributor said ICHRP has “not done a good job of selling its products”. Infact the reality is that ICHRP is not completely neutral, it comes from a position that human rights are ‘good’ and by definition, publishing reports linking human rights to a range of subjects whether it be corruption, climate change, peace, or terrorism implies that such links are valid - it is only one step further therefore to give some practical weight to that view.

83. In addition, ICHRP reiterated the point that it does not see government policy makers as its focus of attention - it has never privileged governments over other audiences nor sought to influence the content of specific national official policies. This again highlights the need for greater clarification of ICHRP’s mission statement which states that one of the organisation’s objectives is to ‘produce research reports and briefing papers…These are brought to the attention of policy makers….in (inter alia) governments’. The mission statement does not privilege governments over others but it does put governments on an equal footing with other targets. ICHRP is free to interpret its mission in a narrow way that does not commit to influencing policy-makers, government or otherwise. However, in the view of the evaluation team, this would not seem to live up to the mission which the organisation was set up for. In addition and pragmatically speaking, nor would it respond to donors who have increasing expectations about the ability of research to influence policy. This is an issue which merits further discussion within ICHRP, a written explanation of the mission statement should be provided so that the organisation as a whole has a common and agreed understanding of its role/mandate. ICHRP may also consider amending the mission statement if this is seen as ambiguous or out of step with the organisation’s purposes.

4.2.5 Constituency/Partnerships

84. A frequently heard criticism was that the ICHRP operates in a “small, cliquey circle” and that it needs to reach out more widely “to people who aren’t as clubby about human rights orthodoxy”. The evaluation concurs with these assertions which may account for ICHRP’s low visibility outside a small group of human rights thinkers. In fact, most of the people who replied to the evaluation questionnaire
were people previously connected with ICHRP research as part of consultative processes or as actual researchers. The majority of respondents were from NGOs or academia (as an indicator, 55% of key informants proposed by ICHRP were from NGOs, the rest were from government, UN/multilateral agencies, academia and ICHRP itself).

85. Some reports do better than others: ‘Corruption’ did well to reach out but even here the process did not bring in traditional anti-corruption players (police forces and the like); ‘Climate Change’ did not overcome sectoral boundaries, “few people in “Climate World” would have heard of ICHRP” and ‘Terrorism’ was seen as limited, “having a seminar with lawyers has limited impact… would do with meeting fewer lawyers and focus more on political and social scientists”. The handling of the NGO accountability report raises interesting questions about how ICHRP views its constituency. Opposing views about the publication of such a report among ICHRP’s human rights counterparts delayed progress for a number of years. Some express disappointment at this delay and see it as a “test of the independence of the work of the Council”; “is this taboo?” they ask. ICHRP might say that it strived to find a neutral course between two opposing sides. This may be the case but its approach was described as “insular” with the consultation restricted to a limited group of human rights interlocutors. If ICHRP had seen itself as serving a wider constituency - victims of human rights violations, other human rights NGOs, governments, donors, the public at large, for example - the issue may have appeared differently. In any event, it could have been helpful for the Council to reach out to other NGO accountability initiatives which have gathered significant pace in recent years (e.g. HAP, OWT etc.) in order to share common experiences/challenges and find solutions. The Council has recently decided to move forward with a web-based discussion on this issue.

86. In general, the question of partnerships needs to be approached more strategically and to apply across the board to all reports rather than being left to the discretion of individual research directors. There are various ways in which ICHRP could expand its partnerships, particularly with national level policy-makers in government:

- Council Members could play a more active role by helping build partnerships with government policy-makers, universities, research institutes and in-country NGOs. There should also be more proactive use of Council meetings held abroad to seed partnerships and mount parallel workshops and seminars.
- Foster relations with regional and national/local organisations - The evaluation team heard from small local NGOs particularly in the Islamic world, for example, who wish to have a stronger partnership with ICHRP.
- Develop a network of supporters or ‘champions’ across the world, whether these are organisations or well-placed individuals in government or NGOs who can help identify targets for different issues.
- Target and identify national level policy-makers by working more closely with diplomatic missions in Geneva and identifying relevant home ministry contacts that way, or by developing direct national contacts through country level supporters and Council members.
- Geneva remains the hub for international policy-making on human rights. ICHRP should make more of its presence in Geneva and its comparative strength of being a research institute/think tank alongside other organisations which are UN agencies and NGOs. It has the potential to establish stronger relations with government, UN and NGO representatives located there.
- Target policy-makers in certain countries/regions selected on a rotational basis as a focus for certain reports in order to impact and reach out at the national level.
- Work through donors, past and present, to reach decision-makers within their organisations and amongst their counterparts.
4.2.6 Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

87. Having a system for planning, monitoring and evaluating activities is key to influencing policy makers and showing the impacts of those efforts. As the previous FORD/SIDA evaluation pointed out, the likelihood of impact from a project can be increased if it is planned for. There are a number of ways in which these areas can be strengthened:

- **Strategy** - ICHRPP does not have a strategy setting out its medium and long term goals and its mission statement gives broad direction only. Not having a strategy gives the organisation a certain agility but can also lead to a lack of direction and corporate vision and inefficiencies. A strategy would give the work of the Council some structure, help with sequencing activities, defining objectives, setting deadlines and unifying staff.

- **Monitoring and evaluation** – ICHRPP needs to systematically monitor progress at two levels: firstly, the implementation of the overall strategy (is the organisation moving in the right direction, is its structure adequate to deliver on the strategy, is it using appropriate approaches); and secondly, the implementation of individual projects (whether the right targets are engaged, whether appropriate evidence is being collected, whether dissemination and follow-up activities are suitable etc.) ICHRPP has stepped up such activities since the last evaluation – the former communications officer followed up some impacts; the website is regularly tracked and monitored; the follow-up of individual reports like ‘Climate Change’ is happening. The ‘Corruption’ report is particularly well tracked for impacts. In addition, ICHRPP has always demonstrated a positive openness to external evaluations. These processes need to be systemised and become a clear management priority going forward. Staff require capacity building and defined responsibilities to make monitoring and evaluation part of everyone’s job with strong leadership and management from the top. Periodic reflection sessions involving all staff (and other stakeholders) as well as mechanisms for internal peer review could help engender a continual process of learning and improvement.

- **Other organisations** have developed much learning which ICHRPP can draw on. The ODI RAPID project specifically looks at how organisations carrying out research and advocacy can better monitor their work. ODI approaches monitoring at different levels: strategic (longer term plans, logframes, matrices, Board/Council reviews); management (regular reporting against business plan etc.); Quality of outputs (Board/Council reviews, peer reviews, user surveys, focus groups); Uptake (webstats, citation analysis, surveys, logs); and impact (impact logs, evaluations, stories of change, episode studies). ODI RAPID provides technical advice to other organisations on these aspects and its website is a valuable resource of materials. Amnesty is very open to sharing its own learning on the development of M&E approaches. One World Trust’s project on the accountability of research organisations and SEI’s review of impact are both useful references.

4.2.7 Communications

88. This particular function merits its own discussion given the acknowledged need to raise ICHRPP’s visibility especially among policymakers. This issue was well-recorded in the last evaluation report and ICHRPP responded to this by hiring a communications and outreach officer for a period. The evaluation team’s reference to communications, marketing, promotion and branding here is about making ICHRPP known in the human rights world – among government officials and NGOs who are engaged in policy formulation on human rights. This implies effectively targeting policy-makers, building and sustaining relations with them, identifying events and opportunities for making ICHRPP visible, and by making ICHRPP responsive to their needs for capacity building, as a forum for open discussion etc. The evaluation team is not suggesting a broad communications strategy aimed at targeting the general public but rather a discreet, effective and targeted communications and external relations plan:

- **Communications staff** – there is in urgent need for suitably qualified communications staff to deal with external relations. By default such work is currently led by the research directors,
but theirs’ is a different skill-set more focused on intellectual quality and peer evaluation than on practical issues concerning distribution and targeting of practical policy. The position requires a clear job specification and supporting resources and authority within the organisation. There is an inevitable tension in all organisations engaged in research between those who carry out the work and are concerned about the precision of their findings, and those who need to package this information in a way that is accessible to the outside world. The communications function is vital at all stages of research, including planning. The communications function should be prioritised over other functions if budgets are limited, as one strong supporter of ICHRP put it, a “substantial part of the salary budget should not be allocated to having nice thoughts, but rather allocated to people doing the continuous leg work to ensure that whatever those thoughts are reach the people they are trying to influence”. The evaluation team would concur with the discussions which followed the last evaluation, where the donor SIDA suggested prioritising a communications post over the third research director position. Donors confirm the value of committing resources to follow-up and infact DFID now requiring a number of their research grant-holders to commit 10% of overall research budgets to research communication.

- **Communications plan** – there is a need for a holistic framework setting out targets, methodologies, branding, formats, products, translation, and monitoring. To pick up on a few issues:
  - **ICHRP products need clear branding** - the report covers for example are tastefully designed but do not headline ICHRP adequately.
  - **Standardise promotion** of reports - currently some are launched to great fanfare e.g. ‘Standard Setting’ involved the Mexican ambassador, others slip out un-noticed. The launch of the reports should be flagship annual events which rally the whole organisation, Council members and all and engage other key external stakeholders like donors.
  - **Portfolio of products** – the full reports can be retained and preserve research integrity but need to be supplemented by a range of shorter reader friendly outputs such as summary reports, policy briefs etc. The Council has made efforts in this direction but the evaluation team feel reader-friendliness could be further enhanced. Issues of design and layout also require attention. There is much learning from other organisations on these aspects, see ODI RAPID’s work or guidance produced by the Canadian Health Research or DFID which refer for example, to page limitations, font size, paragraph numbering, the use of visual aids, diagrams etc.
  - **House style** - the creation and application of a house style and associated clear standards on the appearance and accessibility of Council reports is a must. This should go beyond merely the overall format and cover style and embrace matters of style, structure and presentation. There should be a review of “house style” and the production of writing guidelines through an open and participative exercise. Ensuring that appropriate house style guidelines are in place, and enforced (and that the underlying rationale is understood by all those working for the Council and by all potential recruits) should be regarded as a core management function.
  - **Translation** - there is no consistent approach, with research directors often making do with translation students or ad hoc offers of support. Translation is a costly enterprise, and ICHRP would be better off working towards the production of short summary reports which can be translated at low cost rather than translating full reports.
  - **Media** – the work of the Council is not conducive to mainstream media coverage but a more strategic and nuanced approach e.g. articles, Open editorials and the like (perhaps under the name of Council members) in newspapers, magazines, practitioner journals (not necessarily just human rights given the interdisciplinary nature of their work) would give ICHRP a more discreet media profile fitting of its mandate.
• **New technologies** – the Council needs to modernise, “their approach belongs to the pre-technical age … totally outmoded in the 21st century” said one, another added, “85 page reports are very passé”. ICHRP has done well with its efforts to update its website (which was complimented), and to use e-alerts but these have come rather late and there is much more scope for embracing new technology particularly for invoking discussion and debate (e.g. listserves and blog spaces for general discussions on human rights or for consulting with users on new topics or drafts; use of YouTube and other social networking mediums to convey messages; posting publications in key policy forums like Australian Policy Online).

• **Databases** - ICHRP contact databases require urgent attention. Several interviewees called this “a continuing and difficult problem”. The distribution lists are vast, numbering several thousand persons and in a disorganised state with missing names, email addresses, telephone and contact details, and a lack of indexing and categorisation. Reports are sometimes sent out to general mailbox addresses giving no surety that ICHRP’s reports ever reach the right targets: the extremely low response to the evaluation questionnaire which tracked the path of ICHRP reports, suggests they do not. The lists are in need of a clean-up, at least to check if people want to be on these lists (there were odd responses from people claiming never to have heard of ICHRP despite being on its lists). ICHRP reports using the database in a selective way, by explicitly identifying recipients for reports who have a direct interest in the report in question. The evaluation nonetheless found this process could be further refined and targeted - the four reports under review were sent to large numbers of people in a somewhat indiscriminate way (Terrorism sent to 1911 persons; Climate Change to 964; Corruption to 494; and Peace to 42) for instance. The team also came across other examples of inefficient e.g. the Climate Change report was sent to 115 members of the European Parliament in hard copy, which without some kind of event to launch the report seems an inordinate waste. ICHRP is in the process of updating its database which it hopes will address a number of issues but notes that improving the system has been a costly and time-consuming matter.

5 **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

89. ICHRP is highly valued by the majority of its users as a unique human rights organisation with an invaluable role to play in human rights discourse by virtue of its independence and its ability to produce quality cutting edge work. ICHRP is able to demonstrate an influence on the thinking of other NGOs, multilateral organisations/UN agencies through some of its reports though impacts on government policy-makers are markedly less. Impacts arise opportunistically, as in the case of ‘Climate Change’, where ICHRP’s report perfectly timed with the growing prominence of the issue on the global agenda, or by strong networking and strategic partnerships, as in the case of ‘Corruption’. The latter is a particularly good model for ICHRP’s future work as it shows how impacts can be generated for more specialised subjects of limited interest, more likely typical of ICHRP’s usual work. Although all reports involve a consultation process, the ‘Corruption’ report seemed more successful in bringing key policy-makers on board in the preparatory phase, in building strong and lasting partnerships, in tapping into national and regional level human rights networks and in taking full advantage of opportunities which arose by chance. The process of producing the report is thus as important as the report itself when it comes to having impacts. It is worth recalling that ICHRP is a small organisation and that it has made these achievements with a relatively limited budget.

90. Although ICHRP’s work is valued among its current consumers, the evaluation heard from stakeholders in government, NGOs and the donor community who do not find its work as relevant to themselves and to the policy agenda as a whole. ICHRP has low visibility in the wider international arena. Even its closest supporters have to concede that it is little known amongst NGOs let alone governments; with an inference that it serves mainly a limited group of human rights thinkers whose job it is to be interested in human rights ideas, “it operates within a small, cliquey circle, talking mainly
to folk it knows and who know it", was a typical criticism. These are important challenges for ICHRP. Despite the good work done on individual reports, it is at the core of ICHRP’s mandate to “bring this to the attention” of policy-makers and to “inform discussion of human rights policy”. It further commits to producing work of “practical relevance”x. The organisation needs a stronger profile with policy-makers at all levels, including policy-makers in government if it is to be seen as a relevant institution. Furthermore, in an increasingly competitive funding environment, recognition and visibility are a must if ICHRP is to thrivexi.

91. There are a number of ways ICHRP’s operations can be enhanced to meet these challenges. The changes needed are not fundamental, ICHRP remains a much needed and viable institution in the way its founders conceived, but significant adjustments to its approach and ways of working are desirable. Central is the need for a more strategic approach to planning and partnerships with policy-makers as well as better communication, dissemination and promotion of its work. The first ten years of the Council’s life have been important in establishing the organisation, in defining a niche role and in laying the foundations. The time is now ripe to move the Council to another level. The evaluation report makes many suggestions for how the Council might develop its role (4.2.4) and its partnerships with others (4.2.5). It also considers how ICHRP can enhance its research and consultation process (4.1.), it inner workings and broaden the range of its work (4.2.2.) and funding base (4.2.3.). These are key strategic questions which merit examination and discussion by the whole Council. The numerous suggestions made in the text are thus not repeated here but ICHRP is encouraged to review them closely. The evaluation report instead aims to focus on a few key actionable and priority recommendations which are central to strengthening ICHRP as an institution irrespective of wider decisions on its role and activities:

- **Communications** (Section 4.2.7)- Greater priority needs to be given to the communication, marketing and promotion of ICHRP’s work. This function continues to be under-valued in the organisation and needs to be more on a par with the research function itself. ICHRP should:
  - Recruit a suitably qualified communications professional in a role which is accorded sufficient resources and authority to enable it to function effectively.
  - Develop a communications plan (section 4.2.7) addressing issues such as house-style, branding, formats, methodologies and databases, and specifying the communication standards to be monitored in the individual research design documents especially regarding the identification and engagement of target audience.

- **Governing Council** (Section 4.2.1) - The ICHRP Council is a rich resource but could play a more active and engaged role. The ICHRP Secretariat should:
  - Prioritise the engagement of Council Members and commit appropriate resources to ensuring that this valuable resource is fully used particularly in facilitating connections with policy-makers and potential academic/NGO partners in the countries in which Council members are based and in following up ICHRP reports.

- **Funding** (Section 4.2.3) - Fund-raising is a continuing challenge for ICHRP resulting in a precarious existence which rests on the success of its most recent reports. ICHRP should:
  - Develop and implement a more holistic fund-raising strategy which draws on the potential for collaborative approaches, diverse funding sources and ways of maintaining and utilising relations with donors to the maximum effect.
  - Ensure this function is adequately supported by deputing a Council/Board Member to work with the Executive Director, and by ensuring sufficient technical and administrative support to produce quality funding proposals.

- **Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation** (Section 4.2.6) - ICHRP lacks a systemised approach to planning and monitoring its work. ICHRP should:
  - Adopt a medium term strategic plan.
Develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation plan.

Develop the capacities of all staff on monitoring and assign responsibilities to all with clear management from the top.

- **Internal Organisation** (Section 4.2.2) - A number of organisational factors related to internal structures, systems and resource allocation seem to hold ICHRP back from functioning at an optimum level. ICHRP should:

  - Make an assessment of internal issues and consider how these might be re-configured to better serve the interests of the institution as a whole. The incoming Executive Director with the support of suitably qualified organisational development specialists may wish to make use of the transitional period to review these matters.

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1. DFID Research Strategy, 2008-13
2. Gender was added as a criteria to the DFID research quality matrix by the evaluation team – see Annex B for details of assessment.
3. The system of recruiting and managing interns appears to be working effectively but cannot substitute ongoing needs for research support.
4. See [http://www.oneworldtrust.org/csoproject/cso/resources](http://www.oneworldtrust.org/csoproject/cso/resources) and also [http://www.hapinternational.org/other/links/quality.aspx](http://www.hapinternational.org/other/links/quality.aspx) for a list of such initiatives. The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, for example, has moved through a process of consultation among member NGOs to the adoption of a system of self-regulation and certification - [http://www.hapinternational.org/about/history.aspx](http://www.hapinternational.org/about/history.aspx)
6. Particular ODI/PAPID documents of use to ICHRP are: ‘Tools for Policy Impact’ (Start and Hovland); ‘Making a difference: M&E of policy research (Hovland); and Briefing papers (Bridging research and policy in international development’ and ‘Helping researchers become policy entrepreneurs’.
9. Terms such as “marketing” “branding” “communications” “consumers” are now very widely used in professional public administration to describe the types of activities envisaged here – see for example, [http://www.coi.gov.uk/services.php](http://www.coi.gov.uk/services.php)
12. This wording “practical relevance” is often used in the introductory cover pages to reports – see ‘Terrorism’ for example.
13. The report and conclusions address the specific questions raised by the TOR but for the sake of completeness, findings relating to particular TOR questions are mapped in Annex F.