

Human Rights Measurement Initiative

Strategic Plan: 2020-2023

[DRAFT for feedback from friends and partners of HRMI, 24 March 2020]



Foreword

The Human Rights Measurement Initiative (HRMI) came into being just over four years ago, driven by a heartfelt conviction that *what gets measured gets improved*.

The life of every person on our planet is profoundly affected by how well governments treat and invest in their people. But no one has been comprehensively measuring how well governments use their power and resources to ensure people are treated well – that is, how well they meet their human rights obligations. Until now.

HRMI brings a unique combination of expertise and political independence to do just that. By providing *comprehensive and rigorous* tracking of the human rights performance of countries, we *build on* and *add value to* existing qualitative monitoring by human rights NGOs and others. Our innovative methodologies allow for countries' progress to be systematically tracked over time, and compared across countries.

We have been told that the measurement work we are doing 'could not be done' by multilateral organisations, due to conflicts of interest with some members and funders. Our independence permits us to track country performance objectively and transparently.

We have award-winning and peer-reviewed methodologies that are accepted by leading human rights practitioners and academics. Our economic and social rights measures are the only ones that take country resources into account. This allows us to reveal the extent to which countries are effectively using their available resources to realise their people's rights to education, food, health, housing and work. Our civil and political rights measures use a survey of experts that we developed to access information that no one has systematically gathered before – allowing us to amplify the voices of in-country human rights experts around the world.

As we write this, in mid-March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic is sweeping the world. Countries have closed their borders, livelihoods are disappearing, and the death toll is rising. We feel lucky at HRMI that we already work remotely across our globally-distributed team. Our measurement work does not require the HRMI team to travel, and can continue unhindered. Indeed, now is a more critical time than ever to significantly expand our country coverage so we can carefully measure country human rights performance through one of the defining moments of our time.

In just a few short years we have established our credentials and attracted collaborators and supporters. We are now at the stage where we require greater resources to scale our work for real impact. This strategic plan sets out our vision for our next steps. We invite you to join us.

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Co-founder and
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Our vision and mission

Our vision is for a world in which individuals, communities, governments, businesses, and civil society have a clear and nuanced understanding of their country's human rights performance, and use that understanding to bring about legal and policy changes that improve people's lives.

In this world, all governments seek advice not just on how to grow their economies and increase their GDPs, but also on how to improve people's lives by better respecting, protecting, and fulfilling their human rights obligations.

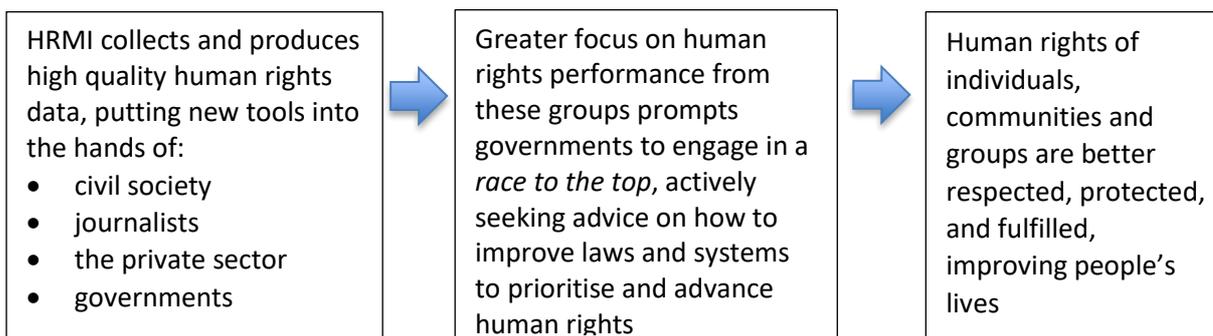
Our contribution to this vision is through our mission:

Our mission is to produce world-changing human rights data tools that track the human rights performance of countries.

Theory of change

Our mission is founded on the understanding that *what gets measured gets improved*. Prior to HRMI, no one was seeking to produce a comprehensive set of human rights measures.

HRMI's theory of change:



HRMI's overarching goals

We will pursue our mission by achieving the following three goals:

1. Develop robust country-level measures of human rights performance that are well accepted by both the academic and human rights practitioner communities.
2. Publish the measures in an accessible and easy-to-use format, with regular updates.
3. Support data users to understand and use the data effectively.

How will we achieve these goals?

We will achieve our goals by putting a lot of care and design into *how* we do our work. We create structures – in-person where possible, but often online – that allow for diverse input into the development of our measurement frameworks, and dissemination of our data. Our core practices include:

- **Human-centred design:** Our data production and data dissemination work are shaped using human-centred design ('co-design') techniques, led by trained facilitators. This approach brings a diverse range of participants and expertise into the room, and opens up the space for participants' lived experiences to influence design.
- **Regular user-testing:** We innovate quickly. This means 'lean' prototyping a tool and testing it with potential users (observing their experience with the tool itself), before iterating and re-testing. We use this approach regularly to iterate our expert survey, further develop our economic and social rights measures, and improve our Rights Tracker (our data visualisation website).
- **Collaboration:** At its heart, HRMI is a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration between experts and activists from across the world. Respectful and honest conversations are at the core of how we work and collaborate well together, and we are growing our toolkit to facilitate these conversations.

Our values

The values that guide our work are those of an organisation that is:

- Collaborative ● Useful ● Rigorous ● Innovative ● Transparent ● Independent

Our deliverables

Currently, our [Rights Tracker](#) provides the following, updated annually:

190 country profiles of which 19 contained a complete set of data in 2019	Data on 5 economic and social rights for up to 190 countries. These are the rights to education, food, health, housing and work
	Data on 8 civil and political rights , for a growing number of countries. These are the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, political participation; freedom from torture, arbitrary detention, disappearance, death penalty, and extrajudicial killing.
	Information on 29 at risk groups for all HRMI survey countries.

Specific goals for the next three years

Our work to date is just the beginning. Our goal is to expand the country coverage, time series coverage, and breadth of our data production. Within the time-frame of this strategic plan, and *conditional on securing the required funding*, we expect to:

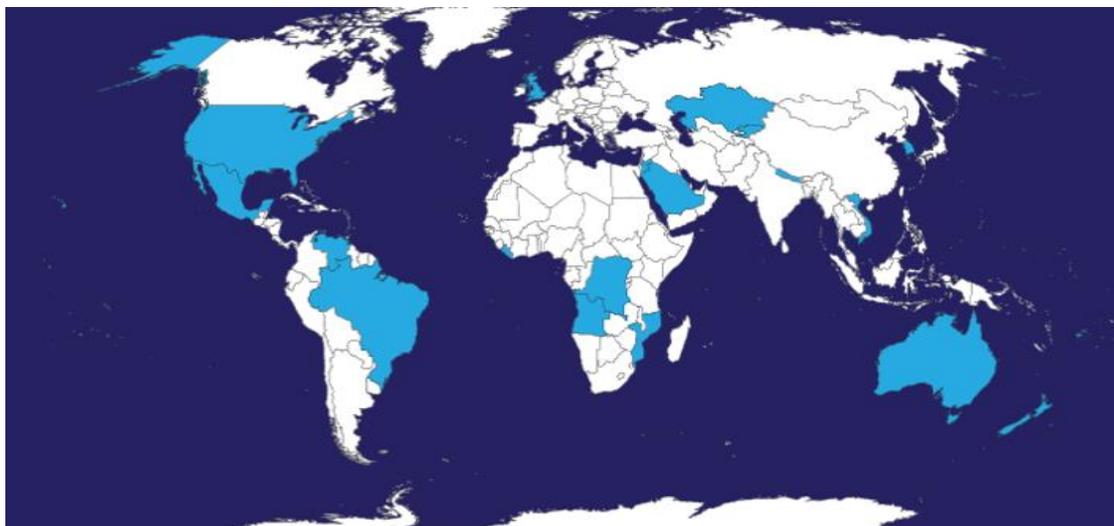
- Expand our civil and political rights data production to at least one new region of the world every 12-18 months, reaching 80-100 countries by 2023.
- Roll out a new set of methodologies covering one new thematic priority, with work on a second thematic area well underway

Regional civil and political rights data expansion priorities

In 2020 our expert survey coverage of 19 countries will grow to over 30 as we expand our existing data coverage across the Pacific region. **Our goal is to expand our civil and political rights data production to at least one new region of the world every 12-18 months.**

Getting to global coverage is imperative because key data users, such as the World Bank and international human rights NGOs, have told HRMI that the more comprehensive our database is, the more useful it becomes.

To meet our country coverage goals, HRMI aims to cover a total of three full regions by 2023, in addition to the 19 globally scattered countries we are already covering (for these, see map below).



Map showing the 19 diverse countries included in HRMI 2019 survey dataset

The Pacific is the first complete region to which we have expanded our expert survey. Consistent with our principles of producing data that will be useful, we listened to the concerns of participants at our 2019 Pacific co-design workshop, and in response introduced a new Pacific module to our expert survey for the region. This module adds new questions about issues of concern to the region including: climate crisis; violence against women and other vulnerable groups; cultural rights; and indigenous rights. In June 2020 we will launch this inaugural Pacific data set together with our standard set of civil and political rights measures, and our updated set of economic and social rights, expanded to cover additional countries and territories in the Pacific region.

The sequence of subsequent regional expansion will likely be driven by funder priorities and the enthusiasm of regional partners. For each region, expansion of our expert survey of human rights practitioners will allow us to provide:

- Systematic measures of at least 8 different civil and political rights, allowing rigorous tracking of trends over time within each country, and identification of country-specific nuances.
- Valid cross-country comparisons, allowing more sophisticated analysis to support targeted and impactful advocacy.
- Detailed quantitative and qualitative research about which groups of people are particularly at risk of each type of right violation in each country – for economic and social rights, as well as civil and political rights.

In addition, there will also be scope to tailor our data tools to each region. See below for some possible region-specific considerations:

- **Asia** is home to roughly three-fifths of the world's population, suggesting enormous potential benefits for humanity from an improved understanding of how to help bring about improved human rights performance. Many people in this region experience very serious rights violations, including: widespread discrimination against, and in some cases mass detention of, minority groups; state-sanctioned extrajudicial killings; and crimes against humanity and alleged genocide. At the same time, the region includes some relatively good performers, such as South Korea, one of the better performing countries already in our survey dataset.
- Many countries in the **Middle East and North Africa** have nuances and complications that our existing survey tool can be modified to capture, including countries with multiple governance structures (such as Israel/Palestine and Libya). Our baseline 19-country dataset already includes Jordan and Saudi Arabia.
- In **the Americas**, the measurement challenges often include an interplay between civil and political rights and economic and social rights, which our dual datasets are well placed to address. Systemic issues of discrimination against indigenous peoples will also be picked up by our forthcoming indicators and measures covering indigenous rights, once that thematic priority is further advanced.
- While many countries in **Europe** help to set a strong human rights example for the rest of the world, there remain some important challenges that nuanced data can help to shed light on, such as discrimination against migrants, hate speech, and systemic discrimination that makes it harder for minority groups to enjoy their economic and social rights.
- Our baseline dataset already includes four countries in **sub-Saharan Africa**, and highlights a diversity of human rights performance within the region, with Liberia significantly outperforming Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mozambique on all civil and political rights. Complete coverage of countries in this region would provide significant opportunities for country leaders to learn from their neighbours' successes.

Thematic priorities

HRMI aims to eventually track country performance on *all rights set out in international human rights law*. That covers civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights. We also seek to produce specialised datasets to track countries' respect for and protection of the human rights of specific vulnerable groups of people. Our philosophy is to be responsive to first-hand requests from those in the field, so that the development of new methodologies for measuring these rights will be driven by mandates from groups and

communities. We have an open call for collaboration with human rights practitioners, researchers and academics on our website. There is no one-size-fits-all methodology for measuring human rights, so fit-for-purpose approaches must be co-designed for each thematic area.

Approximately every two years HRMI will roll out a new set of methodologies covering one new thematic priority. Already, work on the following five thematic issues has begun, in various initial stages. The full launch of each workstream will depend on mandates from human rights defenders and activists, cooperation agreements with research partners, and financial support.

Human rights defenders

Worldwide, human rights defenders, who bravely strive to improve their countries, are under significant pressure and attack. It is widely stated that the space for legitimate, peaceful civil society activities is shrinking in repressive states, and we need to be able to verify and document these impressions with robust, cross-nationally-comparable data. We also need to be able to identify those places and circumstances where civil society space is expanding so we can learn what factors and policies effectively promote positive change.

In consultation with human rights defenders working in numerous jurisdictions, HRMI is collaborating closely with an ever-growing range of credible national, regional and international civil society organisations, think tanks and universities to contribute toward improved data on the threats facing human rights defenders worldwide. While HRMI's initial focus is on all human rights defenders generally, additional funding will help separate threats to defenders by their particular issue areas, such as women's rights, indigenous rights, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, environmental rights, and land rights.

The rights of women and girls

In spite of major progress made by the women's rights movement, women and girls are still routinely discriminated against, including in terms of access to education, political participation, and health and reproductive rights. Violence against women is a major problem in every country in the world, and in many places women and girls are still forced into marriages, trafficked into sex slavery or forced labour, and trapped in conflict zones where rape is used as a systematic weapon of war. However, for all the ubiquity of these issues, we still lack the rigorous cross-national indicators needed to help motivate states to improve their behaviours.

At the request of numerous data users who work on women's rights issues, HRMI proposes to produce a specialist set of metrics, which will address numerous glaring gaps in current reporting. This work will be undertaken in consultation with women defenders, activists, researchers and academics. By working closely with networks of women's rights organisations and leading think tanks and universities, HRMI will ensure the production of much-needed data which has not been produced for many jurisdictions ever before.

The rights of indigenous peoples

The historical ravages of colonisation, occupation, and forced assimilation have long served to deny indigenous people enjoyment of their rights, and indigenous people continue to face violence, threats, and discrimination by both state and non-state actors in countries around the world today. However, while indigenous rights defenders and activists are bravely working on these issues everywhere they arise, the international human rights regime's

response to these violations has so far been inadequate. The presence of metrics that track the performance of countries on indigenous rights would help equip an international coalition of indigenous rights activists with powerful information that could be used to secure indigenous peoples' rights.

On the basis of requests and mandates from indigenous rights defenders, activists, researchers, and academics, HRMI's Dr James Hudson is building a global coalition of indigenous rights organisations to collectively advance the measurement of country respect, protection and fulfilment of the rights articulated in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics (SOGIESC)

In countries around the world, LGBTQIA+ people find their physical well-being, their mental health, their livelihoods, their expression, and, sometimes, their very lives threatened. However, violence and discrimination against people on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression could be more easily prevented if we were more capable of using rigorous data to hold governments accountable for the treatment of LGBTQIA+ people by both state and non-state actors.

SOGIESC rights organisations have asked HRMI to work with them to develop measures to systematically capture the extent and trends of human rights violations against LGBTQIA+ people worldwide, so that more sophisticated analysis can boost advocacy effectiveness. HRMI's work in this area is being led by Dr Andrew Dalton.

Measuring inequality: extending economic and social rights coverage to population sub-groups: HRMI already produces a comprehensive set of economic and social rights measures which draw on publicly-available socio-economic statistics. Driven by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), substantial global resources are currently being devoted to improving the availability of globally harmonised socio-economic statistics. Over the next three years, we would like to leverage off these efforts to:

- Continue to expand our data disaggregation to show gaps in rights enjoyment between women and girls compared to men and boys.
- Incorporate improved statistical indicators, as global harmonisation of key indicators improves.
- Expand our population disaggregation to also show gaps in rights enjoyment between other population sub-groups, for example, people living in rural, versus urban, locations, and people in different income quintiles.

While we list our regional and thematic priorities separately in this strategic plan, in practice the work we do to advance each one of them will also have strong cross-cutting benefits for the others.

For whom?

We will only realise our vision when actual and potential data users understand and are able to use human rights data effectively. There is enormous potential for human rights data to be *combined* with stories to engage both hearts and minds, to convince leaders and decision-makers, policy experts, civil society and the public-at-large. HRMI does not engage in advocacy directly ourselves, and many human rights advocates are not accustomed to working with numbers, so collaboration with users is a core HRMI priority.

Different users have various applications for our data:

- **Human rights practitioners and journalists** have asked HRMI to help them tell their important stories, hold governments to account, and push for change.
- **The academic community** seeks to improve global understanding of human rights challenges and solutions.
- **Ministries of foreign affairs and development cooperation agencies** want to receive new and accurate information on the improvement and regress of rights in various jurisdictions to provide an accurate picture of the state of human rights in partner countries and countries of concern, so they can increase the effectiveness of their development aid and responsiveness in the conduct of their international relations.
- **Charitable foundations and trusts** have sought to gain deeper insights based on human rights measurements to boost the effectiveness of sector-wide funding.
- **National Human Rights Institutions** wish to benchmark their country performance against best practice, and to track their countries' progress in a consistent manner over time.
- **Investors** have told us they currently use sub-par indicators for deciding where and how to direct capital flows ethically, and acknowledge they need better human rights data.

Each of these groups has different needs and can use our data with different levels of proficiency. It is a priority for us to devote more resources to education and training, as well as continuing to build our profile so that all people who could improve people's lives with our data know what we have to offer them.

Our organisation

HRMI's three founders met in person for the first time at a human rights measurement co-design workshop in October 2015. They each brought a different skill set, and a shared belief that governments can't put human rights at the heart of their agendas if they don't have data that accurately reflect the human rights situation on the ground in their country.

HRMI is a globally distributed collection of individuals who share a collective vision. At this stage of HRMI's development, we have a fiscal sponsor and base of operations in New Zealand, **Motu Economic and Social Policy Research**, a highly-regarded, independent, not-for-profit research institute, and a second base of operations in the United States, **The Center for the Study of Global Issues (GLOBIS) at the University of Georgia**. We are open to adding additional partner organisations, particularly if based in the Global South.

As HRMI grows, we expect to register as an independent, not-for-profit charitable organisation.

While the HRMI team based in Wellington, New Zealand share a physical office, the full team is globally distributed, with meetings occurring several times a week by video call. In-person meetings take place more irregularly, but normally at least once per year, linked to co-design workshops, conferences, and data launches.