

## Supporting Defenders | Building skills & solidarity - Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme 2019

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**Over two intense weeks, 18 dedicated human rights defenders participating in ISHR's 2019 Human Rights Defenders Advocacy Programme (HRDAP) exchanged experiences, strengthened their skills, put them into practice, and built a network of allies in Geneva and across the globe.**



**From** 17 to 28 June 2019, ISHR welcomed 18 committed human rights defenders from around the globe to the 2019 edition of its Human Rights Defenders Advocacy Programme (HRDAP19). The unique programme equips defenders with the knowledge and skills to make strategic use of the international human rights system. It also provides an opportunity for participants to directly engage in lobbying and advocacy activities at the UN level to effect change on the ground back home.

ISHR's Helen Nolan, explains that, having already participated in pre-training over six weeks prior to the in-person training, participants of this year's HRDAP hit the ground running.

'We're incredibly impressed by all that the defenders achieved during their intense two weeks here - it was a privilege to work with them,' said Nolan. 'They absorbed a huge amount of new information and skills, and were able to immediately put it into action: engaging with the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, lobbying diplomats - making sure their issues were heard.'

Today the participants in our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme [#HRDAP19](#) attended the first session of the Human Rights Council [#HRC41](#) [@Helen\\_ISHR](#) & debriefed about learnings afterward. Stay tuned for more pics in the coming days! [pic.twitter.com/O7XeghVL6h](https://pic.twitter.com/O7XeghVL6h)

— ISHR (@ISHRglobal) [24 June 2019](#)

The human rights defenders work on a wide range of areas - migrant rights, women's rights, business and human rights, the rights of LGBTI persons and human rights defender protection - in extremely different contexts: Australia, Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Fiji, Guatemala, India, Iraq, Liberia, Papua New Guinea, Turkey, Uganda, Venezuela, Zambia and the Gulf region.

HRDAP19 coincided with the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council. This meant that as well as receiving training on all the UN human rights mechanisms from a range of experts, participants were able to build networks in Geneva and around the world, lobby UN member States and UN staff, learn from each other's wealth of experience, and even deliver statements and provide testimony at the Human Rights Council itself.

Here is a taster of their many achievements & activities:

- Defenders from Bolivia, Brazil, Papua New Guinea and Turkey worked together to [sound the alarm](#) at the Council on the situation of **environmental, land and indigenous rights defenders - especially women**
- Rosario Martínez from Guatemala discussed human rights violations against **migrants and refugees in Central America** in a side event, with defenders working on Cameroon, the Gulf region & Sudan joining her in engaging with UN experts and sharing examples from their contexts
- Joining [the global campaign](#) working towards renewal of the mandate of Independent Expert on **sexual orientation and gender identity**, defenders from Barbados, Fiji, Liberia and Zambia met with States to lobby and to draw attention to the situation in their countries
- Olga Karach from Belarus spoke at a UN Women event, underlining the challenges faced by **women human**

- rights defenders**, with defenders from India, Iraq & Uganda sharing their insights with different experts
- Defenders engaged in dynamic discussions **with 7 UN Special Procedures**: independent experts on freedom of assembly & association, extreme poverty, discrimination against women, business and human rights, migrants, internally displaced persons, indigenous peoples, and sexual orientation and gender identity
  - Ricardo Villalobos worked with partners to [spread the word](#) - including [in the Council](#) - on the obstacles faced by human rights defenders in **Venezuela** and the human rights crisis
  - Aziz Muhamat from Sudan drew the Human Rights Council's [attention to](#) the situation of 800 people detained by the Australian Government on **Manus Island and Nauru**

Tempting to dismiss the relevance of the [#UN](#). Sitting in on the [#HRC41](#) session, realising that many countries/people who are taking the floor may not have been able to without UN interventions. Painfully slow & often unsuccessful but how else do you get 190+ states in a room? [pic.twitter.com/2oVPGQ6uus](https://pic.twitter.com/2oVPGQ6uus)

— Vani Saraswathi (@vanish\_forever) [24 June 2019](#)

'The ISHR team is incredibly lucky that these impressive human rights defenders have shared their expertise and stories with us,' said Nolan. 'The two weeks have inspired us, and we're thrilled that almost 100% of our participants were either extremely or very satisfied with the programme.'

'We'll be working with our new colleagues over the next year to keep turning action in Geneva into impact at home,' added Nolan.

ISHR's Diego Villanueva adds that 'HRDAP is a whole of ISHR effort and it is thanks to our generous donors that we can help human rights defenders like these in the struggle to make their goals a reality.' [Donate now!](#)

Today we farewell 18 brave human rights defenders who attended our flagship Human Rights Defenders Advocacy Programme [#HRDAP](#). Let them know that you support their fight to protect and defend human rights! [#HRDAP19https://t.co/eOyc28198n](#)

— ISHR (@ISHRglobal) [28 June 2019](#)