“Much has changed since the repositioning of the UN development system. Yet, one thing remains as valid as ever: Human Rights Advisers are an invaluable resource in helping RCs and the UN system put people as rightsholders at the centre of our work. This is what we’re all about. Human Rights Advisers help us find solutions to truly leave no one behind and become proactive in addressing some of the long-standing roadblocks to sustainable development. The Human Rights Adviser programme and UNSDG-HRM Fund that supports it provide a significant contribution to our efforts to support national development priorities.”

Robert Piper, Assistant Secretary-General for Development Coordination, DCO.

WHAT IS THE HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISER PROGRAMME?

The Human Rights Adviser (HRA) programme is a crucial asset in the repositioned UN development system in supporting countries to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. HRAs deployed under the 2012 UNSDG Strategy For the Deployment of Human Rights Advisers to Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams provide catalytic country-level expertise that enables Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) to put human rights at the center of their support to countries, bringing to the fore the values and norms enshrined in the UN Charter for a UN offer that responds to the increasing challenges that countries are facing in reaching their goals for peace and prosperity for all.
KEY AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISERS

1. Supporting ratification / implementation of human rights treaties
2. Integration of human rights into laws, policies, practices and SDG implementation plans
3. Advising on policies and practices to address inequalities / spotlight populations
4. Protection of civic space and optimizing UN’s convening role
5. Capacity building for community-led advocacy on rights issues
6. Human rights analysts and capacity in UNCT
7. HRBA and LNOB in CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks
8. National human rights protection architecture
9. Strengthening human rights in development-related institutions
10. Human rights early warning, prevention and in humanitarian responses
11. UNCT and partners’ engagement with human rights mechanisms

HOW DO HRAs FUNCTION?

HRAs are deployed at the request of RCs on behalf of the UNCTs. HRAs support and assist the RCs, Heads of UN agencies and members of UNCTs to integrate human rights in their programming strategies and implementation as well as to strengthen national human rights capacities. HRAs are deployed under a common Terms of Reference with the RC as the
first reporting officer. The HRA programme deploys both national and international staff according to the country-specific needs.

OHCHR has the overall responsibility and oversight for the deployment of HRAs, and provides substantive support, training and backstopping. This includes valuable institutional and policy support, linkages to the thematic expertise of OHCHR and the international human rights mechanisms, and in some cases additional staff deployed by OHCHR to work with the HRA to further expand the support to the RC and UNCT and national partners. Where relevant, HRAs’ advice also strengthens the integration of human rights considerations in humanitarian response and post-crisis recovery under the direction of the RC/ Humanitarian Coordinator. The UNSDG, through its member entities and coordination mechanisms, and DCO also provide guidance and support to HRAs and engage with HRAs to ensure that their country experience informs the policy-practice loop.

“I would like to emphasize the technical support of the HRA to the RCO and the UNCT in the development process of the assessment and the Socio-Economic Response Plan, mainly to verify the integration of the human rights-based approach and the linkage to the HR recommendations of different UN protection mechanisms to strengthen the response and recovery proposed actions.”

Susana Sottoli, RC Bolivia

“The HRA deployment has been instrumental in taking the UNCT’s aspirations for rights-based development to the realm of action and practical initiatives to operationalize LNOB and enhance partnerships with CSOs.”

Joanna Kazana, RC Belarus

The work of HRAs in providing strategic advice and technical support to focus attention on the situation of groups at risk of being left behind, as well as on the pivotal preventive role of human rights analysis, has proven critical throughout the challenging times faced by countries in addressing the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and striving to achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda. Through this timely and targeted advice, RCs and UN entities were able to identify the specific challenges and obstacles faced by marginalized groups during the COVID-19 pandemic, and advocate for approaches and tools to respond to gaps in access to basic social services and enjoyment of rights. Results achieved with the support of HRAs are possible thanks to the engagement and expertise of RCs and UNCT members, as well as through additional funding from OHCHR and other sources in some cases.

SUPPORT FOR THE HRA PROGRAMME

The HRA programme has grown from just a small number in 2011, to deployments in 43 countries by the end of 2020. The HRA programme covers all geographic regions. Deployments are either (or both) international and national experts as the situation requires. With the launch of the UN Secretary-General’s Call to Action on Human Rights in 2020 and UN Member States’ request for the support of the UN development system in fulfilling their human rights obligations in the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolution (A/RES/75/233), the HRA Programme is expected to continue expanding in response to demand. Supported primarily through the UNSDG Human Rights Mainstreaming Multi-Donor Trust Fund with additional contributions from OHCHR and through other sources, the HRA programme provides a critical resource for ensuring that UNCTs are able to access the support that they need to apply the guiding principles of a human rights-based approach, leave no one behind and gender equality and women’s empowerment to all UN development system activities, from developmental to crisis response operations. The timely and critical support of Member States, from funding contributions
to recognition of the HRAs’ valuable support to countries’ development and human rights progress, are essential in sustaining the programme.

“Human rights are at the core of the UN system’s work, and at all times, including in times of crisis, it is essential to ensure that the support provided does not leave anyone behind. When programmes, projects and actions are designed and ultimately implemented we work with all UN agencies to identify vulnerable and marginalized groups as well as civil society organizations through which aid can and will reach the most vulnerable.”

Bea Ferenci, Human Rights Adviser, Moldova

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

- OHCHR HRA Operational Management: Pablo Espiniella pespiniella@ohchr.org
- UNSDG Human Rights Mainstreaming Multi-Donor Trust Fund Secretariat: Brianna Harrison brianna.harrison@un.org
- MPTFO Gateway: http://mtf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/HRM00