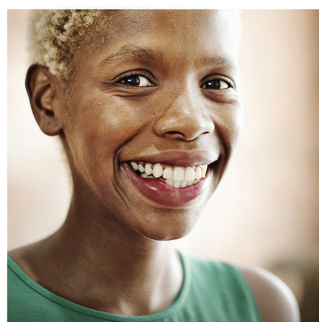




# EQUAL RIGHTS TRUST

Global centre for excellence in equality law



## Strategy 2018–2022







EQUAL RIGHTS TRUST

**GLOBAL CENTRE  
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EQUALITY LAW**

**STRATEGY 2018–2022**



EQUAL RIGHTS TRUST

The Equal Rights Trust is the global centre for excellence in equality law. Our vision is an equal world and our mission is to eliminate discrimination and ensure everyone can participate in society on an equal basis. We work in partnership with equality defenders to secure the adoption and implementation of equality laws.

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The Equal Rights Trust is a company limited by guarantee  
incorporated in England, and a registered charity.  
Company number 5559173. Charity number 1113288.



The Equal Rights Trust was established in 2007, with a mission to combat discrimination and promote equality as a fundamental human right and a principle of social justice. We were founded to pursue and promote the right to equality as a right to participate in all areas of life on an equal basis, which requires taking a holistic, comprehensive approach to different inequalities. Since our foundation, this approach has provided the conceptual basis for all our work, which focuses on how to achieve equality through the enactment and implementation of equality laws.

In 2008, we launched the *Declaration of Principles on Equality*, together with 128 experts from more than 40 different countries. The *Declaration* brings together the best of law and best practice from the UN and around the world at that time. It sets out standards for achieving equality and underlines that states must enact and implement comprehensive anti-discrimination laws.

In our first few years, we focused on research and conceptual initiatives examining the content and application of the right to equality and we also launched our first country project in 2009,

supporting partners in Kenya and India. As of 2018, we have established projects and partnerships in more than 45 countries ranging from Azerbaijan to Zambia. Through these projects we have supported civil society movements to combat discrimination through reform and implementation of equality law.

We have also examined the intersection of equality and other issues of human rights and social justice. This has included work on issues ranging from the link between discrimination and statelessness to the use of equality law approaches to advance economic and social rights and to the issue of discriminatory torture and ill-treatment. In addition, we have supported the development of expert thinking on the right to equality itself, including by publishing a bi-annual journal, the *Equal Rights Review*.

We are launching our strategy for 2018–2022 as we mark the tenth anniversary of the *Declaration*. To develop the strategy, we have assessed the impact of our programmes and projects and consulted our partners and other stakeholders about challenges and opportunities for the future.





## THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

*Saphié Ashtiany, Chair of the Trust*

In the ten years since the Equal Rights Trust launched the *Declaration of Principles on Equality*, the world has been transformed in many ways which have impacted upon the struggle for equality and non-discrimination.

There have been challenges and setbacks: the global financial crisis and the austerity which has characterised the last decade; refugee crises in South East Asia and Europe; revolutions, conflict and civil war in the Middle East and North Africa; and the introduction of laws diminishing the space for civil society activism



in countries throughout the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. There have also been important gains: more than ten countries have enacted comprehensive anti-discrimination laws; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has entered into force; there has been huge progress for LGBT+ rights in many places; we have seen the power of social movements such as the #MeToo campaign to transform the discourse; and the Sustainable Development Goals have recognised the importance of equality law as an essential element of human development.

The late Bob Hepple – one of the Trust’s three founders and our Chair for nine years – charged us to “never stop fighting for justice and equality”. As we prepared this strategy, it has been clear that for all the progress which has been made in the last decade, this fight is far from over. In many countries which have long-established systems of anti-discrimination law, values of tolerance and inclusion are under threat as never before; in the range of states which have enacted comprehensive anti-discrimination laws in recent years, the long road to implementation is just beginning; and there remain many places where the prospect of such comprehensive laws is still an unrealised ambition. What has also been clear as we have consulted our partners and stakeholders is that

the people committed to meeting these challenges want and need support as they do so.

With this strategy, we renew our commitment to the struggle for equality and justice for all. We do so with a commitment to put collaboration at the heart of everything which we do. We coin a new term – “equality defenders” – to encompass all those whom we aim to serve. For us, an equality defender is anyone – civil society representative, lawyer, journalist, government representative, philanthropist – committed to promoting a world in which all can participate on an equal basis. Our strategy focuses on supporting equality defenders to press for the adoption and implementation of comprehensive equality laws as an essential means to the achievement of an equal world. We will do this through increasing knowledge and understanding of the right to equality, strengthening the capacity of equality defenders and increasing collaboration between equality defenders.

As we enter our second decade, our commitment to creating an equal world through law is undimmed. Please read on to find out about our theory of change and our ambitious goals for the coming five years.

**Saphié Ashtiany**





# TOGETHER FOR EQUALITY: ASSESSING IMPACT AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

*Jim Fitzgerald and Joanna Whiteman,  
Co-Directors*

We are proud to present our shared vision for the Equal Rights Trust over the coming five years. It is a vision we share not just with each other, but also with our partners and stakeholders in the struggle for equality.

The approach which we have taken to developing this strategy embodies the Trust's values. As a collaborative, consultative and accountable organisation, we have developed our strategy through consultation with our partners and beneficiaries – the people we serve. Reflecting our commitment to rigour and excellence, we have sought to learn the lessons from our work over the last decade, and to listen to the feedback we have received, particularly from those who have evaluated our projects. As a result of this process of consultation and reflection, we have developed a strategy which we are confident will make the Trust a relevant and impactful partner in the struggle for equality.

## OVER 6000 DISCRIMINATION SURVIVORS RECEIVED LEGAL SUPPORT

Over the course of the last year, we have undertaken a thorough assessment of our achievements to date and a consideration of future challenges and opportunities. We have consulted with our partners and with civil society activists, lawyers, academics, donors and experts working to promote equality, speaking with stakeholders spread across the world, from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas. We asked these people to reflect on our work to date – what has worked and what has not, what has been relevant and impactful, where and how we could make improvements. We also asked them to reflect on the world in which we operate today and whether, in their view, our approach

## STRATEGIC LITIGATION

**"A KEY STRENGTH"**

**67 STRATEGIC CASES SUPPORTED**

is still fit for purpose. We have also analysed the findings from 35 internal and 11 independent, external evaluations of our projects, reflecting on what worked and the recommendations for developments or amendments to our way of working.

The full results of this exercise are published separately in our Impact Assessment, which includes a series of targeted recommendations for the Trust's future activity. Some of the highlights of our achievements and impact identified through the assessment are presented here. The Impact Assessment also gave rise to clear recommendations for how we could build on our work to date, such as:

- Our **partnership model** with civil society is a strength, but we should also look to share our legal expertise with law enforcement agencies, government officials and the judiciary for maximum impact;
- Our recent effort to build sustained **capacity-building programmes**, going beyond training workshops, through mentoring, peer-to-peer support and collaboration, and advice to lawyers on best practice legal service models and litigation, is essential and should continue to be operationalised; and
- Our work to support the establishment and development of **equality coalitions** has seen significant success. We should build on this, with a focus on sustainability, collaboration and networking across borders.

**"HIGH QUALITY" WRITTEN ADVOCACY  
"DETAILED, THOROUGH AND ACCURATE"**

## SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCACY HAS IMPROVED LAW, INCLUDING UKRAINE'S ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW

What came through most strongly from the impact assessment were recommendations to build on what our partners and stakeholders identify as the three key strengths of our work:

- Our **legal expertise in the field of equality and non-discrimination**, in particular in respect of developing the field and identifying best practice in the adoption and implementation of equality laws;
- Our **global experience** which enables comparative analysis and the **sharing of knowledge and expertise** among those working in different countries as well as strong international interventions; and
- Our focus on a **unified, holistic approach to equality**, which enables us to **bring together equality defenders from a variety of interest groups** and recognises that equality cannot be achieved in silos.

## 21 PUBLICATIONS ON EQUALITY

These three reflections inform the three goals which we have defined for the Trust over the coming five years: (1) Greater understanding of equality law and its centrality to rights and development; (2) Increased expertise and capac-

ity among equality defenders; (3) A growing international network of equality defenders.

**16 NATIONAL EQUALITY COALITIONS:  
"JOINT EFFORTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY  
WITH DIFFERENT TARGET AUDIENCES  
AND THEIR INCREASED SOLIDARITY  
HELPS TO MORE EFFECTIVELY DEFEND  
VULNERABLE GROUPS"**

Our strategy does not define a new vision or mission for the Trust. Instead, we reaffirm our commitment to creating an equal world, through enactment and implementation of equality law.

## 2000 EQUALITY DEFENDERS TRAINED

Among many conclusions, our Impact Assessment has established clearly that those working to create this equal world – the global community of equality defenders – want and need the kind of support which the Trust can provide. It has also confirmed our core belief: that in the struggle for equality, we are stronger together. We launch our new strategy with a renewed determination to serve all those engaged in this struggle.

**Jim Fitzgerald**



**Joanna Whiteman**





### Advocacy

We undertake and support human rights advocacy at the international and domestic levels, engaging with treaty bodies, governments and other key stakeholders



### Litigation and legal services

We participate in strategic litigation before international and regional courts and provide technical and financial assistance to lawyers pursuing access to justice for victims of discrimination at the national level



### Research and resources

We carry out legal and policy research to develop the field of equality and help document discrimination and inequality around the world



### Supporting equality defenders

We collaborate in and provide capacity- and coalition-building activities with and for those dedicated to combating discrimination



### Advisory services

We advise and consult for other institutions on how to mainstream the right to equality into training and approaches to other human rights work.



## OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

### OUR VISION

An  
equal  
world

### OUR APPROACH

Working  
in partnership to  
secure the adoption and  
implementation of equality laws

### OUR MISSION

To eliminate discrimination  
and ensure everyone can participate  
in society on an equal basis

### OUR GOALS

1  
Greater  
**understanding**  
of equality law and  
its centrality to rights  
and development

2  
Increased  
**expertise  
and capacity**  
among equality  
defenders

3  
A growing  
international  
**network**  
of equality  
defenders



## GOAL 1:

# GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF EQUALITY LAW AND ITS CENTRALITY TO RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT

If the true potential of equality law to create an equal world is to be realised, there is a need for greater understanding of the rights to equality and non-discrimination. We will achieve this Goal through working to increase knowledge of existing international best practice standards, through collaborating with others to develop understanding in the most challenging areas of equality law and building on our work illustrating the role of equality law in other areas of rights and development.

### Outcome 1.1:

#### Increased knowledge of international best practice on equality law and its implementation

##### *Indicators of achievement:*

- A global best practice toolkit for the development of equality laws.
- 400 intergovernmental, state or judicial representatives with increased knowledge through training and engagement.
- Improved international interpretation of the rights to equality and non-discrimination through 50 recommendations accepted by UN treaty bodies.
- Improved interpretation of the rights to equality and non-discrimination informed by 25 interventions to international and regional courts.



Outcome 1.2:  
**Increased understanding and awareness of progressive concepts in equality**

*Indicators of achievement:*

- An annual *Equal Rights Review* which develops thought in challenging areas such as criminalisation, intersectionality and positive action.
- An expert conference to agree a set of core principles and a strategy for developing the field in one of these areas.



Outcome 1.3:  
**Greater recognition of the role of equality law in the enjoyment of rights and development**

*Indicators of achievement:*

- Research reports developing thought in at least two of following areas: equality law and the Sustainable Development Goals; equality law and the right to education; discriminatory torture and ill-treatment.
- Two global expert working groups, each developing recommendations for action to apply equality law approaches to these problems.



**Our related programmes and services**





## GOAL 2:

# INCREASED EXPERTISE AND CAPACITY OF EQUALITY DEFENDERS

Increasing the expertise and capacity of equality defenders to secure the adoption and implementation of equality laws is at the heart of our strategy. We will achieve this Goal by building on our successful work providing technical, strategic and practical support to equality defenders to engage in advocacy, litigation and the provision of legal services, and by supporting them to develop an evidence base on the need for improved equality laws.



### Outcome 2.2:

## Greater capacity among equality defenders to secure access to justice for victims of discrimination

### Indicators of achievement:

- 5000 victims of discrimination receive quality legal assistance from equality defenders.

### Outcome 2.1:

## Increased capacity among equality defenders to advocate for the adoption of comprehensive equality laws

### Indicators of achievement:

- 2000 more equality defenders with understanding of international standards on equality and best practice in national equality laws.
- Equality coalitions in 15 states are supported to advocate for the adoption of comprehensive equality laws.
- 5 states with new or substantially improved comprehensive national equality laws.





**Outcome 2.3:**  
**Increased expertise among equality defenders to litigate to improve judicial interpretation of equality laws**

*Indicators of achievement:*

- 100 strategic cases brought before national courts by equality defenders.
- 10 strategic cases brought before regional or international bodies by equality defenders.
- 20 judgments improving protection from discrimination.

**Outcome 2.4:**  
**Improved capacity among equality defenders to document and expose discrimination**

*Indicators of achievement:*

Increased and improved evidence of discrimination in 25 states as a result of monitoring and documentation by equality defenders.



**Our related programmes and services**





## GOAL 3:

# A GROWING INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF EQUALITY DEFENDERS

Our third Goal provides the essential link between Goals 1 and 2, by building a vibrant international network of equality defenders to exchange information and share expertise. We will achieve this through building on our work over the last 10 years to support the development of equality coalitions at the national level, establishing an international network for all those committed to creating an equal world through law.



### Outcome 3.1:

#### A growing international community of equality defenders

##### *Indicators of achievement:*

- 5,000 individuals and organisations committed to achieving a more equal world through the adoption and implementation of equality laws.
- 100% increase in the number of legal experts providing *pro bono* and other assistance directly to our mission.
- 100% increase in the number of equality defenders participating in the Equality Volunteers Network.

### Outcome 3.2:

#### Increased collaboration between equality defenders at the national level

##### *Indicators of achievement:*

- 10 new national equality coalitions, networks or forums developed and established.
- Existing equality coalitions in 15 states are stronger and more sustainable.







### Outcome 3.3: **Growing international collaboration between equality defenders**

*Indicators of achievement:*

- A global equality defenders network, open to all those working to promote equality for all.
- More equality defenders engaged in the network each year, growing to 2,000.

### Outcome 3.4: **Greater international exchange of ideas, experiences and information between equality defenders**

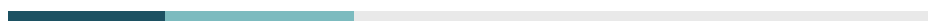
*Indicators of achievement:*

- A multi-lingual e-learning platform, providing training modules and materials, e-seminars and resources for equality defenders.
- An international advisory group providing access to expert information and advice for equality defenders.

## **Our related programmes and services**



**Supporting Equality Defenders**





## OUR VALUES

- **INCLUSIVITY:** We will work with any individuals and organisations who share our vision of equality for all, regardless of their background or characteristics.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** We will be accountable to our donors, partners, beneficiaries and to the wider public.
- **COLLABORATION:** We realise the benefits of bi-lateral and multi-lateral working and will seek to collaborate with other stakeholders, NGOs, partners, potential partners, donors etc, in all we do.
- **CONSULTATION:** We will listen to those we serve when developing our work, implementing our projects and reviewing our approach.
- **TRANSPARENCY:** We will maximise the information we make available about our work and learnings from it, so our network of equality defenders may also benefit from the lessons we learn.
- **RIGOUR:** We will demand a rigorous evidence-base for all of our interventions and seek to adopt and promote best practice approaches to research and documentation to ensure this.
- **EXCELLENCE:** We will strive for the highest quality in both our conceptual work and its practical application.
- **INNOVATION:** We will work with our partners to innovate in order to respond to the changing context and develop effective strategies for progress.

We will be uncompromising on our values, but adaptable in our approaches.







 EqualRightsTrust