



## **The Equal Rights Trust Annual Activity Report (July 2014 – June 2015)**

This report provides an account of the work undertaken by the Equal Rights Trust between July 2014 and June 2015. It is prepared for the [Board of Trustees](#) meeting on 17 July 2015, for reference, review and discussion.

### **1. Introduction**

The Equal Rights Trust exists to advance equality worldwide: combat all forms of discrimination and promote equality as a fundamental human right and a basic principle of social justice. Our special place in the international human rights movement is defined by our strategy of promoting equality in a unified human rights framework<sup>1</sup> expressed in the [Declaration of Principles on Equality](#),<sup>2</sup> which sees equality in the context of all other human rights.

The Trust pursues its purpose through a number of coordinated strategies, including advocacy, research, litigation, capacity-building, creating coalitions for change and developing resources on equality. Much of our work is organised as a range of distinct though tightly interrelated projects. Since May 2014, the work of the Trust has been streamlined into four programmes: [Advocacy](#), [Litigation](#), [Developing Resources on Equality](#), and [Supporting Equality Movements](#).

This report begins with a brief overview of highlights of the Trust's impact during the period July 2014 – June 2015. This is followed by a listing of projects on which we worked in that period. Next, a review of the four programmes makes up the major part of this report. Further, the report covers communications. The last section is an update of the Trust's institutional development, including governance, administration, funding, fundraising and human resources.

### **2. Highlights of Achievements in July 2014 – June 2015**

In the reporting period, the Equal Rights Trust has achieved significant impact, highlighted below.

- [An original strategy of empowering human rights defenders in countries where they are most at risk developed in the last few years began to produce excellent results.](#)

---

<sup>1</sup> The unified human rights framework on equality is a holistic approach of promoting a more equal and just society, while keeping in view both the specificities and the overarching aspects of the different strands of equality and types of discrimination. The unified framework brings together: a) the types of inequalities based on different grounds, such as race, gender, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, among others; b) the types of inequalities in different areas of life, such as the administration of justice, employment, education, provision of goods and services, etc.; c) socio-economic and status inequalities.

<sup>2</sup> The Declaration of Principles on Equality was adopted in 2008, as a collaborative effort of 128 international experts.

The unified human rights framework on equality has been applied with increasing efficiency as an entry point to work on some of the most sensitive issues, in some of the most difficult contexts around the world where human rights defenders are strictly monitored, restricted, or persecuted by oppressive regimes, as well as contexts of partial freedom and shrinking space for civil society.

- A major advocacy tool and resource on inequalities in Sudan has been created

In October 2014, in partnership with the Sudanese Organisation for Research and Development, we launched [\*In Search of Confluence: Addressing Discrimination and Inequality in Sudan\*](#). This country report received good media coverage and is expected to be useful in rights advocacy related to Sudan for a number of years. Its main thesis – that inequality is the root cause of the past and current armed conflicts in Sudan – is bound to gain broad acceptance. Three UN treaty bodies have already made use of the report: the UN Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights endorsed its findings and recommendations, in particular in respect to inter-ethnic relations, sexual violence in conflict and the adoption of comprehensive equality law. There is also evidence of impact on the discourse in Sudan and the wider region. In October 2014, the Trust's partner organisation, Journalists for Human Rights, launched a Declaration which has subsequently been signed by more than 200 journalists, calling for action to address discrimination, discriminatory violence and hate speech. The report has already been used by civil society, including the Enough Project which focuses on ending crimes against humanity.

- 16 states were subjected to international and 5 states to national level advocacy pressures on discrimination issues.

In the reporting period, **16 states** were subjected to **international scrutiny** and pressure to improve compliance with their non-discrimination commitments: UN bodies made recommendations to these states reflecting recommendations made in 15 shadow reports filed by the Trust and nine advocacy letters co-authored by the Trust together with partners. In addition, **five governments** were directly targeted by Equal Rights Trust advocacy interventions at the **national level**, including through recommendations contained in three major publications, two advocacy statements, and one submission in response to a public inquiry.

- Contributions to the development of equality jurisprudence were made through strategic litigation.

Efforts of earlier years have resulted in **12 court victories** in **6 countries** in the reporting period (1 in India, 1 in Kenya, 2 in Malaysia, 4 in Moldova, 3 in Nigeria, and 1 in the USA). Some of the cases have significant positive consequences. For example, in the Trust-supported *Asha Kiran* case in India, in March 2015, the Supreme Court demanded a full report from central and state governments into conditions in mental health institutions throughout India.

- Over 1800 victims of discrimination received legal services.

The Equal Rights Trust has developed and expanded its involvement in ensuring access to legal services for victims of discrimination in several countries, through designing models for the provision of legal services, and overseeing their implementation. Since July 2014, the complaints of more than **1500 women and girls** relating to gender based violence, land and economic injustices and lack of access to education have been acted on by 33 community based organisations across **Kenya**. In **Russia**, over **300 discrimination complaints from LGBTI persons** have been processed under our project there.

- New resources on equality were created.

There has been evidence of significant impact of the Trust's new resources published in the reporting period: (i) the December 2014 publication [Economic and Social Rights in the Courtroom: A Litigator's Guide to Applying Equality and Non-Discrimination Law to Advance Economic and Social Rights](#); (ii) two new volumes of the [Equal Rights Review: Volume 13](#) focusing on the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and [Volume 14](#) – on equality and religion. The Trust's online news service continued to spread news on some of the most important court cases and legislative developments related to equality, sending 43 news statements in the reporting period (9 Court Watch, 9 Legislation Watch and 25 advocacy and other statements) to 7,100 recipients.

- Expertise on equality and human rights was created or increased in 13 countries, benefiting over 500 participants.

During the reporting period, the Trust held **23 training workshops and seminars** on equality law or various aspects of equality and human rights in **13 countries**, raising or creating a level of expertise on the essential elements of equality law benefitting **500 participants**.

- Civil society activism on key human rights and equality issues was generated and/or shaped by the Equal Rights Trust's approach through 10 events and participation in international campaigns.

Since July 2014, the Trust facilitated the development and operation of **10 civil society equality forums, round tables and similar events** targeting over **250 participants** from **11 countries**, devoted mostly to elaborating common strategies on equality issues. We also contributed to **two international campaigns**: on gender equality in nationality law, and on statelessness.

### 3. Projects Listing

Equal Rights Trust projects fall into two types: [thematic projects](#) and [country projects](#).

Each of our **thematic projects** focuses on certain aspects of equality, addressing emerging or complex issues in the field of equality law, and examining how the realisation of the right to equality can help to address other problems of human rights or social justice. Their scope is either global or multi-country. A summary of the Trust's ongoing thematic projects is provided below:

1. **Improved human rights protection for stateless persons** – since March 2010, when we published [Unravelling Anomaly: Detention, Discrimination and the Protection Needs of Stateless Persons](#), advocacy for better protection of stateless persons from discrimination has continued through a number of actions, jointly with other organisations.
2. **Discriminatory torture and other forms of ill-treatment of persons with disabilities** – this is a project which started in November 2010 in **India** and **Nigeria** and featured the development of legal and policy guidelines on the prevention and remedy of torture and ill-treatment of persons with disabilities, based on the documentation of abuses, test litigation and capacity building.
3. **Rohingya rights** – since March 2011, the Trust has been working to strengthen the human rights protection for stateless Rohingya through targeted research in six countries (**Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia and Thailand**) followed by advocacy at national, regional and international levels.
4. **Realising economic and social rights through the use of equality law** – launched in July 2011, this project aimed at building strategies of advancing socio-economic rights and resulted in producing a guide for litigators. The key output of this project – [Economic and](#)

[\*Social Rights in the Courtroom: A Litigator's Guide to Applying Equality and Non-Discrimination Law to Advance Economic and Social Rights\*](#) – was published in 2014.

5. **Equality and freedom of expression in Sudan and South Sudan** – since November 2012, we have been working on the relationship between equality and freedom of expression in conflict situations with journalists and human rights defenders from these countries, enhancing their cooperation and their capacity to balance freedom of expression with the responsibility to counteract hate speech and discrimination.
6. **Ethnic and religious discrimination in Central Asia** – under this project, which started in January 2013, the Trust is working in partnership with two NGOs and a network of human rights defenders to undertake training, research, advocacy and litigation activities aimed at combating all forms of discrimination, but focusing in particular on discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds, in five countries: **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan**.
7. In September 2014, the Trust began a project focused on **ending gender discrimination in nationality laws**. It aimed to research two countries which maintain gender discriminatory nationality laws (**Nepal** and **Madagascar**) and two countries which recently amended gender discriminatory nationality laws (**Indonesia** and **Kenya**), to support the international campaign to end gender discriminatory nationality laws (of which the Trust is a steering committee member). As a member of this campaign, the Trust is also conducting some national level capacity building on the issue.
8. In January 2015, the Equal Rights Trust started a project to support human rights defenders to **protect women from religiously based human rights abuses**, focusing initially on **Iran** and **Pakistan**. Project activities include knowledge and skills transfer, support for human rights defenders, documentation of discrimination, and advocacy.

Equal Rights Trust [country projects](#) focus on combating discrimination and promoting equality within individual countries. All country projects are based on the unitary human rights framework on equality, but while some cover all grounds and spheres of life, others have a special focus on one or more grounds or issues of equality. Country projects are implemented in partnership with organisations based in the target country, and typically involve capacity-building; research and documentation; activities to facilitate collaboration between different equality stakeholders; advocacy; and strategic litigation and/or legal services. A summary of the Trust's country projects is provided below:

1. In [Azerbaijan](#), we are working with Tomris Women's Organization and other human rights defenders on a project to increase the capacity of civil society to combat discrimination from a unified perspective through training, support to a national Equality Forum, the development of a comprehensive report on discrimination and inequality, and supporting litigation and advocacy. We completed an earlier project in Azerbaijan, also in partnership with Tomris, which had focused on discriminatory torture and ill-treatment, in June 2013.
2. In [Belarus](#), we are working with the Belarusian Helsinki Committee on a project to empower civil society to advocate for equality law reform, through training, creating a national Equality Forum, facilitating the development of proposals for an equality law, and advocacy. Under an earlier project in Belarus, we developed and published a comprehensive report on discrimination and inequality in the country.
3. In [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), the Trust has been working with the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and the Centre for Informative and Legal Aid on a project which seeks to improve the implementation of anti-discrimination law.

4. In [China](#), we are working with Chinese activists on a project to empower civil society to combat discrimination. The project involves training, documentation of patterns of discrimination, supporting cooperation, litigation and advocacy.
5. In [Egypt](#), the Trust is working with partners in two different regions to increase the capacity of civil society to combat all forms of discrimination, through training, documentation of discrimination, litigation and advocacy efforts.
6. In [Guyana](#), we are working with the Society against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD) and the Justice Institute of Guyana on a project, our fourth in this country, to combat discrimination through legislative advocacy and capacity-building for the judiciary and practicing lawyers. We are also working with SASOD to combat discrimination in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.
7. In January 2013, in partnership with the Amman-based NGO Mizan, we launched a new project tackling discriminatory torture and ill-treatment in [Jordan](#). The project follows a previous one which had a focus on gender equality, also in partnership with Mizan.
8. The Trust launched a project in [Kazakhstan](#) in January 2015, working in partnership with the Human Rights Organisation "Liberty", a non-governmental organization that advances freedom of expression. The project aims to increase the capacity of Kazakhstani civil society and media to promote equality in the enjoyment of freedom of expression.
9. In [Kenya](#), the Trust is working with the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya) to increase access to justice for women and girls who experience discrimination through the developing, establishing and supporting of community-based legal advice services situated within existing Community Based Organisations (CBOs). This is the Trust's fifth project in Kenya.
10. In January 2014, we launched our second project in [Moldova](#), partnering with Promo-LEX to empower civil society to combat all forms of discrimination through documentation, litigation and advocacy, following the adoption of the 2012 Law on Ensuring Equality.
11. Since 2010, the Trust has been working in [Nigeria](#) in partnership with the Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP) to provide direct assistance to victims of discriminatory torture.
12. In December 2013, we commenced a project in [Russia](#), jointly with a national LGBT network, on a project to empower civil society to challenge discrimination across Russia, with a focus on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.
13. In May 2014, the Trust began to work in [Serbia](#), in partnership with the Belgrade-based group Praxis. The project aims to improve protection from discrimination and promote equality through a set of strategies including work with media, advocacy and strategic litigation.
14. In [Solomon Islands](#), we are working in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community on a second project which focuses on gender discrimination, including in particular gender-based violence.
15. In late 2014, the Trust completed its third project in [Sudan](#) focused on raising awareness of patterns of discrimination in the country by publishing a comprehensive report on

discrimination and inequality and advocating for legal and policy reforms at the international and regional levels.

16. In [Turkey](#), the Trust is working with Black Pink Triangle on a project to empower civil society to challenge discrimination against LGBTI persons in the Aegean and Marmara regions of the country.
17. In [Ukraine](#), we are active in initiatives to challenge discrimination, with a focus on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity as part of the unified framework on equality, and our main partner is the LGBT network Nash Mir.
18. In November 2014, the Trust launched a new project in the [United Kingdom](#) which is designed to empower Roma communities to apply non-discrimination provisions contained in the Equality Act 2010 and other legislation in defence of their rights.
19. In October 2014, the Trust launched a project in [Yemen](#), in partnership with the National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms (HOOD) to protect and empower human rights defenders through training, legal services and capacity building.
20. The Trust is working as a partner to the NGO Friends of Rainka on a project to challenge discrimination against LGBTI persons in [Zambia](#).

## **4. Programmes**

### **4.1 Advocacy**

In the period since the last annual report, the Equal Rights Trust has continued in its work to expose patterns of discrimination globally and to combat inequality and discrimination both nationally and internationally. A major component of our advocacy work has been advocating for the [Declaration of Principles on Equality](#) by using the Principles as a basis for assessing legislative and judicial developments. This section covers: the preparation and launch of major publications as our chief advocacy tools; and actions to promote equality and non-discrimination through interventions at the international and national level.

#### **4.1.1 Major Publications**

The fourth report in the Equal Rights Trust Country Report Series, [In Search of Confluence: Addressing Discrimination and Inequality in Sudan](#), was launched on 1 October 2014. The report contains a wealth of new information, casting new light on well-known human rights problems in Sudan, such as the detention, torture and harassment of political opponents of the regime from ethnic communities, and exposing little-known patterns of discrimination, such as the treatment of gay and bisexual men. The report presents original direct testimony from over 260 persons discriminated against on the grounds of religion and belief, race and ethnicity, political opinion, gender, disability, sexual orientation and health status. The launch succeeded in achieving strong media coverage. It was followed by the distribution of the report to more than 100 international stakeholders. The report has provided the basis for advocacy at the international level which will remain highly relevant for a number of years. It argues that inequality propelled by the al-Bashir government's policies of promoting an Arab Islamic identity to the exclusion of ethno-religious diversity is the root cause of the continued conflicts in the western, southern and eastern peripheries of the country.

Two research reports produced under the Trust's Rohingya projects, [Equal Only in Name: the Human Rights of Stateless Persons in Malaysia](#), and [Equal Only in Name: the Human Rights of Stateless Persons in Thailand](#), were launched on 17 October 2014, at an event co-hosted by

the Malaysia Bar Council in Kuala Lumpur. The launch was well attended and widely covered by local and international media. Speaking at the launch, the chair of the Bar Council's migrant rights programme endorsed the reports and their findings, and said that the Bar Council would use the Malaysia report as an advocacy tool to engage the government on the issue. The launch of the reports succeeded in gaining extensive media coverage in the focus countries.

The Trust's publication [\*Economic and Social Rights in the Courtroom: A Litigator's Guide to Applying Equality and Non-Discrimination Law to Advance Economic and Social Rights\*](#) was [launched](#) on 10 December 2014 at Matrix Chambers, London. The guide – which is the outcome of a three year research process and has been the subject of extensive consultation – identifies equality and non-discrimination strategies that NGOs, lawyers and activists may employ in seeking to advance economic and social rights before courts.

#### **4.1.2. Advocacy at the International Level**

During the year, the Equal Rights Trust continued to intervene at the international level on equality issues, to create or increase international pressure on governments and hold them to account for their obligations related to equality.

In June 2014, we submitted a shadow report to the **UN Human Rights Committee (HRC)** in advance of its consideration of the state report by **Sudan**. Using original testimony and extensive desk-research, the report highlighted the role of discrimination on various grounds in respect of the rights to freedom from torture and other forms of ill-treatment, freedom from arbitrary detention, freedom of expression and other rights guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The report called on Sudan to ensure the enjoyment of all Covenant rights without discrimination, to amend or repeal discriminatory laws and to enact comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. In its concluding observations, issued in July 2014, the Committee made a number of recommendations which echoed those suggested by the Trust, including those related to the need to review and amend discriminatory laws and the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination law.

At the end of June 2014, the Trust made two submissions to the **UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**, proposing questions for inclusion in the Committee's list of issues for its reviews of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan. Our submission in respect of **Azerbaijan** focused on the gaps and deficiencies in the Azerbaijani legal framework in respect of prohibiting discrimination against women, particularly a number of definitions within the existing laws which were inconsistent with international standards, and a near-absence by the authorities to implement and enforce the existing legislation. The Committee's list of issues included both of these areas – judicial practice related to cases involving discrimination against women and the inconsistency of the definitions used in legislation with the requirements of the Convention.

The submission in respect of **Kyrgyzstan** highlighted a number of gaps and deficiencies in the Kyrgyz legal framework such that the requirements of the Convention are not being met, particularly a failure to prohibit multiple including intersectional discrimination, a lack of any temporary special measures to ensure gender equality and a near absence of efforts to implement and enforce existing legislative provisions. The Committee's final list of issues included questions on two of our topics – court practices in cases involving sex-based discrimination and the use of temporary special measures.

In September 2014, the Trust made a stakeholder submission to the **UN Human Rights Council** on **Belarus** as part of the Universal Periodic Review process. Our submission used the findings of the 2013 report [\*Half an Hour to Spring: Addressing Discrimination and Inequality in Belarus\*](#) to highlight the failure of the Belarusian authorities to implement the recommendations made at

Belarus' first periodic review. The submission presented evidence of continued discrimination against various groups – including women, LGBT people, persons with disabilities, religious communities and persons living with HIV/AIDS – and the lack of effective state action to address these problems, despite commitments made by Belarus at its first review. The submission urged participating states to reiterate recommendations to improve protections from discrimination made at this first review, and to adopt the recommendations made in the *Half an Hour to Spring* report.

A representative of the Trust spoke at the first **Global Forum on Statelessness**, which was held between 15 and 17 September 2014. At the Forum, we presented our research on the human rights of stateless Rohingya, and also our [Guidelines to Protect Stateless Persons from Arbitrary Detention](#). The Forum, which brought together 300 participants representing all sectors from 70 countries, provided an excellent opportunity for networking and advocacy.

In October 2014, the Trust presented its findings on the human rights of stateless Rohingya at the **South East Asia Human Rights Network Conference** in Kuala Lumpur. The Conference was well attended (approximately 300 participants) and the Trust organised three separate events on the Rohingya: two panel discussions and the screening of a multimedia documentary.

Also in October 2014, the Trust submitted a shadow report to the **UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Solomon Islands**. This detailed shadow report examined discrimination against women in various areas of life in the country and assessed the legal and policy framework on the rights of women to non-discrimination. In its concluding observations, the Committee made a number of recommendations echoing those called for in our shadow report, in particular, that Solomon Islands disseminate information on the criminalisation of different forms of violence under the Family Protection Act; consider enacting legislation on at least 30% of reserved seats for women in Parliament; conduct awareness raising activities on the importance of women's full and equal participation in leadership and decision-making; intensify literacy campaigns for women and men, especially in rural areas; eliminate discriminatory provisions in the area of employment by amending its Labour Act; and raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years of age for girls and boys.

In late 2014, the Trust made three submissions to the **UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** in respect of Kyrgyzstan, Sudan and Thailand. In its submission on **Kyrgyzstan**, the Trust analysed provisions in the Constitution and specific laws designed to prohibit discrimination, concluding that there were a number of weaknesses in the provisions, coupled with failure to ensure their effective implementation in practice. The submission also provided information on a proposed law which would prohibit acts designed to create a "positive attitude towards non-traditional sexual relations", arguing that this could result in discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in respect of various economic and social rights.

The submission on **Sudan** reviewed the impact of discrimination on different grounds on the equal enjoyment of a number of economic and social rights. Based on findings from [In Search of Confluence: Addressing Discrimination and Inequality in Sudan](#), the submission presented evidence that provisions in the criminal law had the effect of limiting the enjoyment of economic and social rights by women and certain religious minorities and that the state's resource allocation policies resulted in discrimination against racial and ethnic groups occupying conflict-affected areas. The submission also analysed Sudanese laws on discrimination, finding that they failed to meet the Covenant's requirements.

Our submission on **Thailand** made use of the findings from [Equal Only in Name: the Human Rights of Stateless Persons in Thailand](#), to show that the Rohingya faced discrimination in access to a number of Covenant rights, including the rights to work and to education. The submission also



analysed the 2014 interim Constitution and the limited legal framework on discrimination and inequality, highlighting how it fell short of the requirements of the Covenant.

In January 2015, the Trust submitted a shadow report to the **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** in respect of **Tajikistan**. The report provided an overview and analysis of the legal framework on equality and non-discrimination in Tajikistan, before making a series of recommendations. In its concluding observations, the Committee echoed the Trust's key recommendation, urging Tajikistan to "expedite the adoption of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law".

Also in January 2015, we submitted shadow reports to the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** in respect of **Azerbaijan** and **Kyrgyzstan**. The shadow reports built on the submissions made to the Committee at the list of issues stage. Each one analysed the legal and policy framework on gender equality in both states and highlighted legislation which discriminated against women, before making a series of recommendations.

In addition to these submissions, the Trust worked with other members of the **Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights** to submit six letters of concern to the Committee on the question of gender discriminatory nationality laws. The letters, on **Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, United Arab Emirates** and **Yemen** sought to inform the Committee of laws which discriminate against women in their ability to acquire, change or retain their nationality, or confer their nationality to their children or spouse.

On 25 February 2015, a representative of the Trust spoke at an event at **Chatham House** entitled "The Rohingya in Southeast Asia: where to from here?" At the event, well attended by key NGO, government, INGO and academic stakeholders, the Trust argued that despite increased media attention to the human rights challenges faced by stateless Rohingya in Myanmar and stateless Rohingya refugees in other countries, the international community has failed to adequately respond to the situation. This failure is due to conflicting interests, a lack of political will and complex regional and international arrangements that require navigation.

On 12 March 2015, the Trust participated in a [side event](#) to the **UN Commission on the Status of Women** annual session, "Achieving Gender Equality in Nationality Laws" convened by the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights. At the event, we presented the initial research findings from our project focused on **ending gender discrimination in nationality laws** and a briefing note setting out these findings was distributed.

On 13 March 2015, the Trust attended the Civil Society Dialogue Network's meeting entitled "**The situation of Rohingya refugees from a regional perspective: International responses and policy options for the EU**", in Brussels. The meeting was attended by EU policy makers and civil society representatives, and was an opportunity for the Trust and its partners to influence the European Union's policy response to the Rohingya situation.

On 16 March, a representative of the Trust spoke at the **European Platform for Roma Inclusion** which took place in Brussels. We presented views on the multi-stakeholder coordination in the implementation of national strategies for Roma inclusion in EU member states.

Also in March 2015, we made a stakeholder submission to the UN Human Rights Council on **Myanmar** as part of the **Universal Periodic Review** process. Our submission used the findings of our ongoing research and advocacy in Myanmar. The submission argued that the violations suffered by Rohingya since June 2012 should be characterised as crimes against humanity. We presented evidence of continued discrimination against the Rohingya, particularly focusing on their arbitrary deprivation of nationality and resulting statelessness, the human rights impact of the June 2012 violence against them, their forced displacement and segregation, concerns around

their right to identity and electoral rights, family related rights (marriage, children etc.) and concerns of crimes against humanity. The submission made various recommendations in this regard.

In May 2015, the Trust worked with other members of the steering committee of the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights to develop proposed recommendations for states participating in the **Universal Periodic Reviews** of **Liberia, Libya** and **Malawi**. Draft recommendations were developed by the Trust and other steering committee members and provided to states which had expressed a willingness to assist the Campaign, resulting in a significant increase in the number of recommendations focused on removing gender discrimination from nationality laws.

Also in May, the Trust submitted a parallel report to the **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** on **Kyrgyzstan**. In addition to an assessment of the state's legal and policy framework on equality and non-discrimination, the Trust's submission presented the results of field research conducted under our project in Central Asia. Using this evidence, the submission highlighted patterns and cases of discriminatory denial or limitation of economic and social rights on various grounds of discrimination.

In May 2015, the Trust called for a [commission of inquiry to be established in Myanmar](#) to investigate the severe discrimination and other human rights abuses perpetrated against the Rohingya in Rakhine State. The Trust's statement was a response to the crisis in which an estimated 7000 stateless Rohingya refugees and migrants from Bangladesh stranded in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. The statement welcomed the focus on the urgent obligation of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to rescue those at sea, but called a long term solution, which requires increased attention on the root causes of Rohingya migration which are inside Myanmar.

At the beginning of June, we submitted a report to the **Human Rights Committee** on the **United Kingdom**. The report presented evidence of discrimination and disadvantage suffered by the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the country, based on research and consultations undertaken under our new project on the Roma. The report also analysed and criticised the government's failure to introduce a number of important provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

In late June, the Trust prepared a submission on **Belarus'** adherence to its obligations under the **Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women**. The submission made use of the Trust's 2013 report [Half an Hour to Spring: Addressing Discrimination and Inequality in Belarus](#), providing evidence of violence against women and discrimination in employment and education. The report also assessed the legal framework on equality and non-discrimination and recommended that Belarus undertake a process of equality law reform.

At the end of June, the Trust marked UN **International Day in Support of Victims of Torture**, by issuing a [statement](#) calling for increased international attention on the prevalence of **discriminatory torture and ill-treatment**.

In July 2015, the Trust participated in the UNHCR NGO consultations in Geneva, and convened a [side event](#) entitled "**Protecting the Human Rights of Stateless Rohingya**". We focused on the situation in Myanmar, following a fact-finding mission in June.

#### **4.1.3 Advocacy at the National Level**

In October 2014, the Equal Rights Trust made a submission to the **Hong Kong** Equal Opportunities Commission in response to a consultation as part of its **Discrimination Law Review**. The Discrimination Law Review aimed to harmonise and improve the four existing ground-specific anti-discrimination ordinances into a single, comprehensive anti-discrimination

ordinance. The Trust's 50-page response to the consultation covered an array of issues raised by the consultation, including appropriate terminology and definitions used in the Ordinance, the appropriate scope of the right to non-discrimination, the removal of certain exemptions and limitations which currently exist in Hong Kong law, the effective enforcement of the Ordinance, and reform of the Equal Opportunities Commission itself.

Also in October 2014, the Trust [wrote to the President of Gambia](#), Yahya Jammeh, urging him not to sign the **Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill 2014** which included a provision criminalising "aggravated homosexuality" (committed where a person engages in same-sex sexual activity and, for example, is a "serial offender", has a disability or is HIV-positive) and punishing it with life imprisonment. The Trust's letter set out how the Bill would violate Gambia's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and also called upon the Gambian authorities to repeal and amend all other existent provisions of the criminal law which punish consensual same-sex intimacy. Unfortunately, in late November, it was revealed that President Jammeh had secretly signed the Bill into law on 9 October 2014.

In May 2015, the Trust called on the government of **Malaysia** to establish an [independent and comprehensive investigation](#) into allegations that its immigration officials were actively involved in the trafficking of stateless Rohingya migrants. The Trust's call followed the discovery of 28 suspected human trafficking camps and 139 mass graves in northern Malaysia, close to the Thai border. Already in its 2010 report [Trapped in the Cycle of Flight: Stateless Rohingya in Malaysia](#), the Equal Rights Trust had provided detailed evidence of the collusion between Malaysian immigration officials and those trafficking Rohingya through camps on the Thailand-Malaysia border. Our statement exposed the hypocrisy of the Malaysian government, which pretended it was shocked by the discovery of the trafficking camps in the jungle.

## 4.2 Litigation

The Litigation programme was launched in April 2014 and its shape and operational capacitation is still work in progress. The Trust's approach to the Litigation programme has developed significantly this year in order to operationalise our greater involvement in ensuring high quality of litigation we support at the national, regional and international levels. The Litigation programme includes two types of work: (i) support and intervention in strategic litigation; (ii) support for legal services to challenge discrimination.

We have recognised the need to work more intensively on an individual and small group basis wherever possible with lawyers taking litigation which is supported by us, to further build their capacity to identify and take strategic equality cases. In 2015, the Trust has, through virtual conferences, provided tailored training on strategic litigation to lawyers at its partner organisation in **Serbia**, Praxis. In addition, in June 2015, in **Moldova**, the Trust and its partner Promo-LEX met with lawyers taking cases under our project to develop case strategies. We shared our approach to strategic litigation and the workshop resulted in a strategic plan for the litigation of a number of further cases and for the follow-up on the cases already in progress. This was based in part on the early indications of need identified through the monitoring work which is underway under the Moldova country project.

Given the increase in opportunities for the Trust to intervene as a third party in cases, including as a result of the increased number of cases being filed the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the Trust is building a network of lawyers with the relevant expertise, to assist in the preparation of briefs on a pro bono basis. It is intended that this network be limited to lawyers with the requisite expertise to limit the need for significant editorial input from the Trust.

The Trust's efforts of earlier years have led to **12 court victories** in 6 countries in the reporting period (1 in India, 1 in Kenya, 2 in Malaysia, 4 in Moldova, 3 in Nigeria, and 1 in the USA). Some of

the cases have significant positive consequences. For example, in the Trust-supported *Asha Kiran* case in India, in March 2015, the Supreme Court demanded a full report from central and state governments into conditions in mental health institutions throughout India.

#### 4.2.1 Strategic Litigation

In 2014-2015, the Trust has supported the filing of several strategic cases before national courts and three cases before the European Court of Human Rights.

- On 22 October 2014, application no. 69086/14 was filed at the ECtHR in *Machina v Moldova*. The case relates to the inhuman conditions faced by a woman with disabilities kept in pre-trial detention in Prison No 13. No adjustments were made to enable the woman, who needed a wheelchair to move around and required assistance to use toilet facilities, to live with dignity in the prison. The case was successful before Moldova's Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality (CPEDEE) but adequate remedies were not available at the national level. The key submission was that Moldova's legal system failed to provide an effective remedy to victims of discriminatory inhuman treatment. The case has yet to be communicated to the state but the Trust intends to request to intervene once this happens.
- On 5 November 2014, application no. 72144/14 was filed at the ECtHR in *Ivanov v Russia*. The case relates to a hate crime carried against Mr Ivanov, an LGBT activist, on his way back from a demonstration in support of constitutional rights and freedoms on 12 June 2012 in Konyushennaya Square in St Petersburg. The applicant was beaten by a group of individuals who shouted homophobic remarks and threw his rainbow flag and banner into a canal. Only one individual was charged and this charge did not recognise the incident as a hate crime. The applicant alleged a violation of Article 14 taken in conjunction with Article 3. The case has not yet been communicated to Russia but the Trust will request to intervene once this has happened. We are supporting, in particular, the development of the argument that LGBT persons are a "social group" – a protected ground under Russian law.
- On 29 January 2015, application no. 7146/15 was filed at the ECtHR in *Lebedev and Nasonov v Russia*. The case relates to a series of rights violations associated with a protest by a group of LGBT activists demonstrating in Voronezh against the state's introduction of the "homosexual propaganda" law in Russia. In a case which demonstrates systemic discrimination against the LGBT community throughout numerous branches of the state authorities, the key allegations are that the applicants' rights to be free from inhuman and degrading treatment, to freedom of expression, to access to justice and to an effective remedy have been breached. The Trust is providing a legal opinion on the Article 14 analysis, to contribute to a detailed addendum to the application. The case has yet to be communicated to the state. The Trust intends to request to intervene once this has happened.

The Equal Rights Trust and its partners in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** - the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina (HCHR) and the Centre for Informative and Legal Aid Zvornik (CIPP) - filed five strategic cases between May and September 2013. At the time of last update from our partners, these cases are still awaiting consideration in the respective municipal courts.

In **India**, seven cases of discriminatory torture and ill-treatment of people with disabilities continue to progress through the courts. In March 2015, an important order of the Supreme Court was secured in *Reena Banerjee & Anr v GNCT & Ors SLP* ("The Asha Kiran case" relating to deaths and inhuman treatment in a mental health institution). In a strong declaration in relation to lack

of compliance with the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, the Court stated:

*[W]e are disposed to think that all the State Governments have a definite role to see that the Act is properly implemented and the persons under disability which includes the mentally challenged persons are taken care of as commanded by the Act. We are absolutely conscious that this case has arisen from an order passed by the High Court of Delhi relating to the Home, namely, 'Asha Kiran' made for mentally challenged persons, yet the pathetic situation of this category of persons which have been highlighted before us in other States cannot be ignored or marginalised. On the contrary, we are obliged to think, occasion has arisen so that there can be a comprehensive study of the situation where this class of people are treated with dignity, respect and as far as practicable feel a part of the main stream of life.*

Accordingly, the Court has ordered that the Union of India and the competent authorities of all state and union territories be identified and then respond to allegations that they are failing to meet their obligations under the Act, an impact far beyond what could be expected when the case was initiated. The Court will next consider the issue on 8 July 2015.

In **Jordan**, the Trust and its partner Mizan for Law (Mizan) have continued planning for strategic litigation cases on discriminatory torture and ill-treatment to be taken in the coming year. The completed project baseline study identified a number of important issues which may be appropriate for strategic litigation.

In **Malaysia**, two cases in which we had intervened in previous years were won during the reporting period. On 7 November 2014, the Court of Appeal of Malaysia in *Khamis and Ors v State Government of Negeri Sembilan and Ors* held that a law prohibiting Muslim men from cross-dressing was unconstitutional and therefore void. The Trust supported the case and prepared a legal brief for counsel outlining the right to be free from discrimination on grounds of gender identity. The Court found that the law in question violated the rights to live with dignity and freedom from discrimination.

On 10 November 2014, the Shah Alam High Court awarded RM 300,000 (approximately USD 80,000) in damages to Noorfadilla Ahmad Saikin, following the withdrawal of the State's appeal against a 2011 decision that found her dismissal as a temporary teacher by a public authority on the ground of her pregnancy breached her constitutional right to gender equality. The Trust had provided a legal brief to counsel in the initial case arguing that the dismissal amounted to gender-based discrimination.

In **Moldova**, the Trust and its partner Promo-LEX filed four cases at the national level, all of which already have a successful ruling from the Council and one of which has now been sent to the European Court of Human Rights for consideration. The key areas for strategic litigation we are currently exploring are direct discrimination against Roma in access to services, discriminatory treatment and other discriminatory violations of the rights of people with mental disabilities and discrimination in employment of public servants on grounds of political opinion.

In **Nigeria**, after a long period of procedural delays, including due to a judicial strike, there has been some progress in relation to four of the 13 cases of discriminatory torture or ill-treatment of people with disabilities which were filed in 2013. In three cases, the court has found in favour of the clients, finding violations of their fundamental rights and awarding compensation of between N1,000,000 and N5,000,000 (equivalent to roughly £3,750 and £18,500). The progress of the remaining cases continues to be slow but we are monitoring the situation. In addition, a further twelve cases of torture have since been filed.

In **Russia**, work on strategic litigation began in December. Five cases have been filed before national courts and two cases relating to inhuman treatment and other rights violations of LGBT activists have been filed before the European Court of Human Rights.

In **Ukraine**, the Trust has been working with its partners Nash Mir on a number of strategic litigation opportunities. During the year, five cases have been filed before the national courts and one before the European Court of Human Rights. Amongst other things, the Trust provided advice and guidance on relevant ECHR jurisprudence in relation to a hate crime case after a cinema was torched by two individuals because, they said, it was showing an LGBT-related film.

In the **United States**, a positive judgment was handed down during the reporting period on a case in which the Trust had intervened in August 2013, in co-operation with the San Francisco based firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP. The Trust submitted an amicus curie brief in support of Mark Reid in connection with *In the Matter of Mark Reid*, No. A 035-973-579 to the U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals. The case concerned a gay man from Jamaica whose claim for deferral of removal to Jamaica under the Convention against Torture was denied because the U.S. Immigration Judge found that Mr Reid failed to “prove” that he was gay. The Trust’s amicus brief outlined the notion of discrimination by perception and explained why, even assuming that the judge correctly found that Mr Reid is not gay, the judge erroneously failed to consider the likelihood that Mr Reid would be perceived as gay in Jamaica and subject to torture for that reason alone. In January 2015, the Board of Immigration Appeals remanded the case to the Immigration Court, holding, among other things, that the Immigration Judge erred by failing to take into account the substantial evidence of violence against homosexuals in Jamaica to the case.

#### **4.2.2 Legal Services**

In **Kenya**, since July 2013, community based organisations (CBOs) supported by the Trust have been providing legal services to women and girls complaining from discrimination. From April 2014 to March 2015, 1,597 women and girls were provided with legal advice: 812 cases related to gender-based violence; 478 cases related to land, inheritance and other economic injustices; and 307 cases involved access to education. It is estimated that a minimum of 1500 women and girls have been serviced during the reporting period. Altogether, a minimum of 3000 women and girls have received legal assistance since the establishment of the scheme. Throughout the year, the Trust and our partner, the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya) worked to improve communications and reporting structures between FIDA-Kenya and CBOs and also to implement an improved process to refer cases to pro bono lawyers. We continued to undertake regular monitoring visits to Kenya to ensure that these processes are functioning effectively.

In **Russia**, with support from the Trust, our partners have provided direct legal assistance to LGBTI persons who have experienced discrimination. As at May 2015, 313 requests for legal assistance have been made and responded to, many of which involve violence.

In both countries, the Trust, working with its partners, has been developing reporting systems for these cases so that strategic litigation opportunities can be identified and acted upon without delay.

### **4.3 Developing Resources on Equality**

#### **4.3.1 *The Equal Rights Review***

During the reporting period, the Trust published two further issues of the biannual journal *the Equal Rights Review* ([Volume 13](#) in September 2014 and [Volume 14](#) in March 2015).

**Volume 13** contains an editorial from [Executive Director](#) of the Trust, [Dimitrina Petrova](#) entitled “[Transformative Shift to Equality?](#)” and articles by Stephen Sedley, “[Constitutional Law and the Right to Equality](#)”, and Iina Sofia Korkiamäki, “[Legal Gender Recognition and \(Lack of\) Equality in the European Court of Human Rights](#)”.

The Special section on **equality and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals** contains articles from the Equal Rights Trust: “[Equal Rights at the Heart of the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#)”, Jim Fitzgerald: “[No One Left behind: Equality Law and the Sustainable Development Goals](#)”, Naila Kabeer: “[Social Justice and the Millennium Development Goals: the Challenge of Intersecting Inequalities](#)”, and Ana Ines Abelenda: “[A Feminist Perspective on the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#)”. There is also an interview on “[Equality in the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#)” with Gay MacDougall and David Bull.

Finally, the volume also contains testimony from community based organisations working as part of the Trust’s project in Kenya, entitled “[Then the Women Started Coming to us: A Growing Women’s Rights Movement in Kenya](#)”; and a section on the Trust’s activities.

**Volume 14** focusses on **religion and equality** and contains an editorial by Dimitrina Petrova entitled “[Religion and Equality](#)” and articles by Bob Hepple: “[Achieving Social Rights through the Principle of Equality](#)”, and Jim Fitzgerald and Richard Wingfield: “[More Haste, Less Speed: Developments in the Ukrainian Framework on Equality](#)”.

The special section contains articles by Aileen McColgan: “[Discrimination on Grounds of Religion and Belief](#)”, Nazila Ghanea: “[Driving while Bahá’í: A Typology of Religious Discrimination](#)”, Richy Thompson: “[Religion, Belief, Education and Discrimination](#)”, Lucy Vickers: “[Religion and the Workplace](#)”, and Tim Cunningham: “[Monitoring Equality – Reflexive Regulation, Planning Systems, and the Role of Discrimination Law: Lessons from Northern Ireland](#)”. Related to the theme of the special, the edition also contains anonymous testimony entitled “[Exiting a Toxic Situation: An employee’s experience of covert workplace discrimination on the basis of religion](#)”, an interview on religion and equality with Dr Ahmed Shaheed and Professor Eva Brems, and a case note by Joanna Whiteman: “[“Vivre ensemble”? S.A.S. v France](#)”.

#### 4.3.2 Research for Equal Rights Trust Reports

##### *Country Reports*

The Trust’s fifth country report, on **discrimination and inequality in Ukraine**, was in the final stages of the editorial process and is due to be launched in Kyiv in August 2015 in both English and Ukrainian. In February 2015, members of the team visited Ukraine for the purposes of validating a draft of the report, gathering opinions, feedback and information from civil society organisations, academics, government departments and others. Following this, an updated draft was prepared in May 2015. The report is over 400 pages long and is the most comprehensive account of discrimination and inequality in Ukraine ever published. It documents patterns of discrimination and inequality on ten grounds ranging from ethnicity, religion and language to gender and sexual orientation; it also includes analysis of the Ukrainian legal and policy framework related to equality and detailed recommendations. Publication is pending.

The Trust is in the final stages of preparation for publication of its sixth country report on **discrimination and inequality in Solomon Islands**. We are also in the final stages of preparing a seventh country report, on **discrimination and inequality in Guyana**.

A number of reports in the Equal Rights Trust **Country Report series** are at various stages of drafting and editing: on **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Jordan, Moldova, etc.**

## *Thematic Reports*

In November 2014 and January and February 2015, field research for the Trust's forthcoming comparative report on **gender discrimination in nationality laws** was completed. The research team conducted field work in the four target countries for the project – Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar and Nepal. In Madagascar and Nepal, the team collected evidence from women on the impact of discriminatory nationality laws and in Indonesia and Kenya, the research looked at the process and impact of law reform which eliminated this form of discrimination. The team also met with key stakeholders in Madagascar and Nepal, including NGOs and government officials. The initial findings from this research were presented at a [side event](#) to the Commission on the Status of Women in New York on 12 March. The full report has been drafted and is in the final editorial stage, prior to a planned launch at a side event to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2015.

Several Equal Rights Trust reports arising from thematic projects are also at various stages of drafting, including on the **human rights of stateless Rohingya in Myanmar and** other countries.

Throughout the year, the Trust has continued to finalise the **Resource Pack on the Discriminatory Torture and Ill-treatment of People with Disabilities in India**. The draft will be ready for a final edit later in 2015.

The Trust is also coordinating field and desk research towards the production of reports focusing on ethnic and religious discrimination in Central Asia.

### **4.3.3 Equal Rights Trust News Service and Virtual Library**

The Trust sent 43 news emails in the period from June 2014 to July 2015, compared to 38 in the preceding reporting period. This included 9 [Court Watch](#) and 9 [Legislation Watch](#) news items (down from 15 and unchanged from the preceding period respectively), together with 25 statements relating to Equal Rights Trust [advocacy](#), [events](#) or publications (up from 14 in the preceding period). The Trust currently sends electronic news to approximately 7,100 recipients.

Following a number of internal discussions, the [Virtual Library](#) will have a much improved platform after the launch of the new website, with its search functionality being more user friendly. The Library currently contains 951 resources on equality.

### **4.3.4 Other Research**

In October 2014, the Human Rights Centre at the University of Nottingham again requested the support of the Trust as a sub-contractor in the production of the UK contribution to the Fundamental Rights Agency Annual Report on human rights. The Trust was asked to assist with two sections of the report, namely: Equality and Non-Discrimination, and Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The completed research was sent to the Centre on 24 November 2014. This was followed by a further round of follow-up in December 2014 and January 2015.

## **4.4 Supporting Equality Movements**

Since the last meeting of the Board, the Trust has continued its efforts to support and promote equality movements in different countries and regions. This section of the report covers the Trust's work in: undertaking assessments of the capacity and needs of civil society and other stakeholders; providing training to civil society and other stakeholders; and coalition-building.

### **4.4.1 Capacity Assessments**



When establishing new projects, the Trust undertakes a number of preparatory activities designed to assess stakeholder capacity and needs, establish baselines and improve its understanding of the context in which each project will be delivered. In the last twelve months, the Trust has launched six projects covering seven countries: China, Egypt, Iran and Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Serbia, the United Kingdom, and Yemen. We have conducted capacity assessment visits in these countries, during which we have met with a broad range of partners and stakeholders in various formats, including focus group meetings. We have been inspired by our partner's passion for equal rights and have been [generating enthusiasm](#) amongst civil society to participate in our activities. Following the visits, we completed **baseline Studies on discrimination and inequality** in each country, as well as studies on the capacity of lawyers and civil society to advocate for the improved implementation of anti-discrimination laws.

#### 4.4.2 Training Workshops

In the twelve months since the last meeting of the Board, the Trust has convened and delivered a total of **23 training workshops**, building the knowledge and capacity of more than **500 people** from **13 countries** (Azerbaijan, China, Guyana, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Netherlands, Russia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, . While the majority of our training has been focused on increasing the capacity of civil society actors to understand and apply international law and best practice on the rights to non-discrimination and inequality, while a number have had a special focus.

#### 4.4.3 Developing Coalitions and Networks

Throughout the year, the Equal Rights Trust has continued to support the establishment and operation of civil society forums and coalitions in different countries, bringing together activists and organisations working on different equality and non-discrimination issues to develop and pursue common agendas on equality. Since July 2014, the Trust facilitated the development and operation of **10 civil society equality forums, round tables and similar events** targeting participants from **11 countries** (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Guyana, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Sudan, and South Sudan), devoted mostly to elaborating common strategies on equality issues.

For example, in July 2014 the Trust participated in a roundtable meeting on equality law reform in Minsk. Leading civil society organisations discussed and agreed recommendations which set out the key substantive and procedural elements of a future national equality law, in line with established international law and best practice.

Throughout the year, the Trust continued its engagement with civil society organisations which work on the **Rohingya issue**, in preparation for the establishment of civil society networks in four project countries – **Bangladesh, Malaysia, Myanmar** and **Thailand**. Hosts have been identified for the networks in these countries. In June 2015, the Trust visited Myanmar to consult civil society organisations and build support for a coalition. In addition to these efforts, the Trust is working to establish an international coalition on the Rohingya and has informally networked with over 50 international, regional and national organisations in this regard.

In October 2014, the Equal Rights Trust and the Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) network convened a two day Conference in Nairobi, bringing together 25 journalists, civil society activists and HRDs from each of **Sudan** and **South Sudan** to discuss advocacy reform priorities and strategy and to develop a common platform for advocacy. The agenda consisted of a number of sessions focused on discussing priorities for advocacy in the three focus areas of the Trust's projects in these countries: freedom of expression, hate speech and non-discrimination, together with sessions on strategy development. The final part of the event focused on a proposal to revise and relaunch the *Nairobi Declaration on combating hate speech and the role of the media in conflict*

*resolution and promoting respect for human rights in the Republics of Sudan and South Sudan* (first launched at a high-level roundtable meeting held by the Trust and the JHR in 2013) as a statement of the agreed advocacy agenda. These discussions ended in an agreement to revise the Declaration and launch on 21 October, two weeks after the end of the Conference. The Declaration was launched as planned and to date more than 230 journalists and HRDs from both countries have endorsed it.

In **Serbia**, a Working Group has been established by Praxis, supported by the Trust, and met for the first time in October 2014 to discuss advocacy and strategic litigation activities, and to ensure collaboration with other initiatives focused on equality and non-discrimination. The Working Group consists of representatives of prominent civil society organisations in Serbia, each of whom works with a different vulnerable group. In April, a roundtable co-convened by the Trust brought together a number of civil society organisations to define joint priorities and key challenges in the implementation of the anti-discrimination legal and policy framework in Serbia.

In February 2015, together with its partner, Mizan for Law, the Trust hosted the first of three planned roundtables in **Jordan** which aim to bring together civil society actors to develop strategies to combat discriminatory torture and ill-treatment. Discussions focused on two issues identified as priorities: discriminatory torture and ill-treatment of women; and discriminatory torture and ill-treatment of persons with disabilities. The roundtable provided useful insights into the problems that participants saw with the legal and policy frameworks in each of these areas.

In late March 2015, the Trust and its partner in **Russia**, the national LGBT network, brought together over 25 stakeholders for a roundtable in St Petersburg on **equality in employment** and led to agreements to improve cooperation between NGOs, trade unions and other CSOs on issues of equality in employment. Agreement was reached on specific proposals to address employment discrimination through working with employers, employees, NGOs and through public awareness raising.

In Central Asia, the Equal Rights Trust has been supporting its partners in **Kazakhstan** and **Kyrgyzstan** as they prepare to establish national Equality Forums in these countries. The first meetings in both countries were convened in the second quarter of 2015.

In addition, the Trust is an active participant in a number of international coalitions and collaborative initiatives designed to combat discrimination in particular areas of life or against particular groups.

Throughout the year, the Trust has continued to serve as an active **steering committee member of the international campaign to end gender discriminatory nationality laws**, alongside UNHCR, the Women's Refugee Commission, the Statelessness Programme, Tilburg University, Equality Now and UN Women. The Campaign was launched at a side event to the Human Rights Council in Geneva in June 2014. Since that time, the Trust has been involved in developing the campaign, with a particular focus on international and national advocacy, where members of the Trust's staff sit on working groups. In addition, the Trust is involved in research which is intended to contribute to the evidence base for the campaign, and is involved in capacity-building initiatives which the Campaign plans to implement.

The **European Network on Statelessness** – of which the Trust is a founding steering committee member – continued its activities during the year. The Trust participated in Network teleconferences and contributed to the growth of the network through recruiting new members, developing its law and policy pillar and contributing to policy development, awareness-raising

and capacity building activities of the Network. The Secretariat of the Network is now a charity incorporated in the UK, and Equal Rights Trust is on its Advisory Committee.

## 5 Communications

Over the last year, Communications have focused on raising the organisation's profile in the media, launching a new website, establishing a presence on existing and new social media tools and re-branding the Trust's products. Activities have also focused on building repositories for testimonies, images, press and other contacts which can help meet Communications objectives effectively.

### 5.1 Press Coverage

In the reporting period, the Equal Rights Trust worked to increase its profile in the media and, in particular, gained significant coverage following a number of report launches.

In July, August and September 2014, coverage was secured in **the Independent** and on **over 15 LGBTI digital news outlets** which outlined our reaction on anti-homosexuality laws in Belarus, Gambia and Uganda.

In October 2015, local and mainstream coverage was gained following the launch of [In Search of Confluence: Addressing Discrimination and Inequality in Sudan](#) by **Reuters, the Guardian** and Yahoo News alongside a number of local Kenyan, Sudanese and regional outlets such as **All Africa**.

Also in October 2014, the launch of the two reports [Equal Only in Name: the Human Rights of Stateless Rohingya in Malaysia](#) and [Equal Only in Name: the Human Rights of Stateless Rohingya in Thailand](#) saw media coverage span over **15 local media outlets**, as well as the **Voice of America** and the **Daily Mail**.

In May 2015 the Trust released a number of reactive press releases on the Rohingya situation which secured coverage in the **London Post** and Malaysian newspapers.

During the course of the year, **our blogs** were also featured on prominent human rights networks including **openDemocracy, Oxford Human Rights Hub** and the **European Network on Statelessness**.

### 5.2 Website

In February 2015 the Trust's website, which was running on an old Content Management System, reached its maximum storage capacity. In April the Trust began work with the ethical web developer, GreenNet, to start planning and building the new website. The website was prepared for launch in July 2015, with an entirely new design, structure, and additional features to showcase our work in a dynamic and accessible way.

To ensure the website has a **contemporary look and feel**, its design has been chosen to both distinguish the Equal Rights Trust and to ensure that it doesn't easily outdate. To emphasise the Trust's latest or most relevant news, its rotating banner on the website's [homepage](#) was redesigned to further encourage users to click through to see our work. Clearly defined boxes highlight latest news, the [Virtual Library](#), our key resources and publications, and donation options. Two entirely new sections are accessible from the homepage - the first showcasing **stories from the Trust's partners and beneficiaries** and the second showing our **live twitter stream**. The homepage also incorporates all of the Trust's new social media icons and a subscribe form so that we can store detailed and accurate records of those opting to join the email list.

**The Virtual Library** – one of the main features of the website and populated with **approximately 1000 resources**, is restructured so that users are more likely to find what they are looking for. The Library has two searches; a [basic search](#) allowing users to search by country and keyword, and an [advanced search](#) so that users can specify further by categories including document type, source and date of publication. Once results are retained, users are then able to order these results by relevance and date of publication.

To display the extent and reach of the Equal Rights Trust's work, a [virtual map](#) highlights the countries where we work directly through extensive multi-strategy projects, as well as those where we have a more limited engagement. After users click on the highlighted countries, they are able to read a short blurb which explains the Trust's work in the given country, along with links to take users to news articles relating to that country and all resources held in the Virtual Library on that country.

### 5.3 Digital

The Equal Rights Trust has continued to grow its presence on the social media tools Facebook and Twitter. [@EqualRights](#) has over **1000 followers** including human rights activists, journalists, lawyers and civil society followers. Over the past year, our Facebook Page has **increased its engagement by 77%**.

To ensure the organisation is staying on top of new digital innovations and to expand its reach to as wide an audience as possible, a [YouTube account](#) for the Trust was created in May 2015.

The Equal Rights Trust has also begun to share news with a number of equality networks, intermediary websites, and other organisation's newsletters. Over the past year, outlets featuring our news have included: **Equality and Diversity Forum**, **ReliefWeb**, **Diversitylink** and the **Association for Women's Rights in Development**.

### 5.4 Branded Materials

In June 2015, a **new letterhead** and a [promotional booklet](#) were designed using the website's new design and colour pallet as guidance.

Plans are now underway for other products to be re-designed, which include the [Equal Rights Review](#).

## 6 Institutional Development

This section includes updates on governance, administration and management, funding, fundraising, and human resources.

### 6.1 Governance

Between Board meetings, the governance of the Equal Rights Trust is delegated to an [Executive Director](#), assisted by a Management Committee (MC). The latter is comprised of several Trustees. In the reporting period, the MC met in September and December 2014 and in March 2015. At each of these meetings, the MC received and reviewed quarterly activity reports and plans, assessed the financial position, provided guidance on fundraising efforts and made decisions and recommendations on a number of specific issues related to strategies, policies, administration, funding, human resources and other matters.

### 6.2 Administration and management

Equal Rights Trust has a smoothly run administration and a full set of policies which make it a model civil society organisation. It has a high standard equal opportunity and diversity policy, a personnel manual comprising a number of policies related to human resources, IT manual, office procedures manual, and a manual on financial controls.

### **6.3 Funding**

The annual audited [accounts](#) for the financial year ending in September 2014 were signed off in December 2014. The total income realised in that financial year was £1,461,545, adding to £103,381 brought forward from the previous year. Expenditure amounted to £1,460,104.

In the reporting period, the work of the Trust was funded by:

- American Jewish World Service
- Arcus Foundation
- Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
- Comic Relief
- European Commission
- Swedish International Development Agency
- UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture
- UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Open Society Foundations
- US Department of State – Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
- UN Women
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees

In addition, the Trust received sponsorship and pro bono support from:

- Ashurst
- Garden Court Chambers
- Matrix Chambers
- Reed Smith LLP
- White & Case LLP

### **6.4 Human Resources**

In July 2015, the Equal Rights Trust had ten full-time staff members and one part-time staff member. Led by an [Executive Director](#) (Dimitrina Petrova), the [staff](#) included:

Head of Advocacy (Jim Fitzgerald);  
Advocacy Officer (Richard Wingfield);  
Head of Litigation (Joanna Whiteman);  
Legal and Programmes Assistant (Jade Glenister);  
Projects Management Co-ordinator (Rohit Gupta);  
Projects Assistant (Yashvi Chandr);  
Communications Manager (Charlotte Broyd);  
Partnerships Officer (Fawzi Barghouthi);  
Head of Finance and Administration (Stephen Osieyo);  
Finance and Administration Assistant (Jeana Vuma).

The Trust also relied on paid consultants, interns and volunteers for many aspects of its activities.