

**AGFE**  
**Advisory Group on Forced Eviction**  
**to the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT**

**Report on findings of preliminary global survey  
of organizations that monitor forced evictions**

This document consists of the following two reports:

1) Global forced evictions monitoring background information to proposed discussions - Advisory Group on Forced Evictions (January 2009)

This is a summary of the findings of a global email survey of organisations that monitor forced evictions, carried out by AGFE Member Jean du Plessis (on behalf of AGFE). The report focuses on the type and scope of data collected, the methodologies used, and the nature of databases maintained by the various organisations.

2) Summary of AGFE teleconference of eviction monitoring organisations (30 January 2009, 11.00 – 12.30 Nairobi time = GMT +3)

The findings of the preliminary survey were discussed and validated in the context of a telephone conference hosted by UN-HABITAT and attended by representatives from the respective organisations. This brief report summarises the discussion on how global eviction monitoring could be made more effective through a collaborative approach.

**GLOBAL FORCED EVICTIONS MONITORING  
BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO PROPOSED DISCUSSIONS  
ADVISORY GROUP ON FORCED EVICTIONS, JANUARY 2009**

**Background**

At the AGFE meeting held in Nairobi on 1-2 September 2008, the following was discussed:

“It was proposed that AGFE should create a database on evictions worldwide. This database would have to add value to existing data bases, maintained by organisations like COHRE, IAI, Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, Slum Dwellers International and HIC. It should provide linkages within regions or between countries with similar contexts/problems. It was agreed that it would be necessary to organise a meeting, inviting all players in the field of eviction monitoring, to tease out the way to go, what to link, and how to avoid any unnecessary duplication. Jean du Plessis volunteered to prepare a short proposal on who should be present, what should be covered and the expected result of such a meeting.”

**Inquiry**

To assist with this proposal, email inquiries were sent to confirm who the key evictions monitoring organizations are, and to get more details from them on the data gathered, the methodology used, and the nature of the database that they maintain.

The following organizations were identified and approached for information: Asian Coalition for Housing rights - ACHR, Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions - COHRE, International Alliance of Inhabitants - IAI, Habitat International Coalition - HIC, Human Rights Watch - HRW, Slum Dwellers International – SDI, Amnesty International – AI. (Note some of the organizations were contacted late and have not yet had time to reply.)

Contacts in each organization were identified, and each was asked a set of questions

- 1. What types / categories of eviction do you monitor?*
- 2. What regions / countries do you cover?*
- 3. What are your main sources of information?*
- 4. Do you verify reported evictions before recording them, and if so how?*
- 5. Do you record the information in an electronic database? If yes, what programme do you use, and can you list the fields?*
- 6. Do you publish or publicise the results of the monitoring? If yes, in what format and how regularly?*
- 7. Do you have a guideline or handbook which describes your monitoring work, and if yes can this be shared with other organisations?*
- 8. Are you aware of any other organisations doing evictions monitoring. If yes please list (and provide contact details if you can).*

Summary of responses received to date:

<b>Amnesty International</b> <b>Contact: Meghna Abraham, Duncan Wilson</b>
Response awaited

<b>ASIAN COALITION FOR HOUSING RIGHTS</b> <b>Contact: Ken Fernandes</b>
<p>Regarding the questions below re. the monitoring of evictions, I have not been monitoring evictions for the past two years. ACHR has been strengthening local groups to monitor and respond to forced evictions. We have been assisting in several ways:</p> <p>a) research methodology: we share how some groups are monitoring evictions and the methodology they are using. Local NGOs publish these reports and disseminate them especially to the media to gain wider support.</p> <p>b) response to evictions: local communities facing eviction threats are supported by local community networks and NGOs. This may lead to a local campaign to stop the forced eviction. Local community networks assist in negotiating with authorities where possible.</p> <p>Another response to forced evictions is to engage with vulnerable communities through surveys, savings and credit and other means so that these communities are organized and can develop alternatives to forced evictions. Through these efforts many communities avoid being evicted and can negotiate with government. ACHR has also supported local campaigns, when all else has failed, through letters of appeal to government. This is often the last resort and it is an opportunity for the community to hopefully gain some time from being forcibly evicted.</p> <p>In the past year, I have worked closely with Depika Sherchan from COHRE's Asia Pacific Programme to assist local groups with their monitoring.</p> <p>I am not sure if these responses have been useful. While ACHR's aim is to stop forced evictions, its efforts have been largely to strengthen local communities to do so. The NGOs and community networks that are part of ACHR have been successful in stopping many evictions and developing viable alternatives for urban poor communities. Efforts have been largely on developing strategies that involve urban poor communities in the planning and development of their settlements. This often requires the involvement of government as well. In the past few years ACHR is focusing more and more in campaigning and lobbying for the involvement of urban poor communities in the planning and development of the city. The experience that is emerging is that if poor communities are involved with other stake holders in the planning and development of the city there is less likelihood of forced evictions. There is information on this on the ACHR website.</p>

<b>CENTRE ON HOUSING RIGHTS AND EVICTIONS</b> <b>Contact: Malavika Vartak</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. COHRE monitors forced evictions (threatened, implemented, and averted) as well as other forms of housing rights violations, such as displacements.</li><li>2. COHRE monitors forced evictions in as many countries as we can, although we have more information on incidents within our focus countries.</li><li>3. Main sources of information include direct information from partner organisations and other local contacts, media reports, reports from other intl orgs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, reports from people directly affected, and facts gathered by COHRE researchers on the ground.</li></ol>

4. When feasible, COHRE verifies information by conducting fact-finding missions. When this is not possible, or not possible quickly, COHRE verifies information by contacting trusted local contacts. If COHRE does not have local contacts, we will attempt to gather as much information as possible from a variety of sources.

5. COHRE researchers record all cases reported in an electronic database. Currently this database is in MS Access, however, an online database will be launched by the end of 2008. This will initially only be available to COHRE staff, but will eventually be made available publicly on the COHRE website - to both enter and retrieve data. The fields are attached (pasted below)

6. COHRE publishes a compilation of this research in the Global Survey series. In the past, this has been a semi-regular publication, but will likely become an annual publication. The Global Survey is freely available in print and online.

7. COHRE has an outdated handbook with a detailed description of our monitoring work. Once the handbook has been updated, it can be made available to other organisations. In the meantime, a basic description of COHRE's monitoring can be found in our donor appeal (attached) under the chapter on the Global Forced Evictions Programme.

8. The other organisation doing global monitoring of evictions is HIC-HLRN. Many other organisations monitor at the country level. IDMC is the primary organisation monitoring displacements.

=====

#### **Database fields and lists**

1. Date of entry

2. Name of Researcher

[label] If you do not work for COHRE, please provide your contact information:

[label] If you are updating this case, please provide the following information:

3. Date case last updated

4. Name of Researcher

5. Type of Incident

Eviction

Other

Combination

6. If other or combination, please explain

7. Status of eviction

Implemented

Threatened

Averted

[label] Date the eviction was either implemented, or is threatened to take place, based on the 'Status of eviction'. Most importantly, please include the year, even if you do not know the day or month. Please write the month in text, not numbers, to avoid confusion with the day.

8. Number affected

9. Unit of measurement

Person

Family

Household

Flat

House

Apartment building

Business

Village

Town

Settlement

Neighbourhood

Region

Other (specify)

10. If there is further information or conflicting estimates, please explain

11. Country

12. Region
13. City/Town/Location
14. What is the implementing agency?
- National Government
  - Provincial or State Government
  - Local or Municipal Government
  - Private Owner
  - Other (specify)
  - Various (specify)
  - Unknown
- [label] If there are various actors involved; if it is unclear who has ultimate authority; or if the implementing agency is not included on the previous list, please explain.
15. Contact details of implementing agency(s)
16. Was compensation offered?
- Yes
  - No
  - Unknown
17. Was alternative accommodation offered?
- Yes
  - No
  - Unknown
18. Was any notice given prior to evictions?
- Yes
  - No
  - Unknown
19. Have there been consultations with affected persons?
- Yes
  - No
  - Unknown
20. Please describe the reason for the eviction
- [label] If possible, please classify the reason for the eviction by choosing from the following lists. 21. If the reason is not on the list, explain fully in the previous field.
22. Classify the reason as stated by officials
- Development and infrastructure projects
  - International events (eg. Olympics)
  - Disputed tenure or ownership
  - Urban 'beautification' initiatives
  - Removal or reduction of state support for the poor
  - Armed conflict
  - Ethnic cleansing
  - Following a natural disaster
  - Other (specify)
23. Classify the reason as stated by the community or organisation
- Development and infrastructure projects
  - International events (eg. Olympics)
  - Disputed tenure or ownership
  - Urban 'beautification' initiatives
  - Removal or reduction of state support for the poor
  - Armed conflict
  - Ethnic cleansing
  - Following a natural disaster
  - Other (specify)
- [label] Feel free to copy and paste text from other sources. However, please put quotation marks around quoted text and include the source directly after quoted text. Also, please include details of all sources used in the Source field below.
24. Please provide background information
- [label] Please enter dates along with a brief description of the relevant event.
25. Events to date
26. Anticipated events
- [label] Please provide a list of all sources used in as much detail as possible, including direct links to articles, dates, authors, email addresses, etc.
27. Source details

[label] Please provide basic contact information (person, organisation, email and phone number) for those who are working on or may have information on this case.

28. Contact details

29. Proposed preventive or remedial actions

30. Proposed alternatives to eviction

31. The Role of COHRE

[label] If updating information about this case, please provide information about outcomes that have occurred since the case entry was created.

32. Outcomes

## HABITAT INTERNATIONAL COALITION

Contact: Joseph Schechla

### 1. What types / categories of eviction do you monitor?

HIC-HLRN monitors all types of evictions and develop methodologies for Member organizations to monitor and document violations of the human right to adequate housing, including forced evictions, as well as to present evidence for judicial and administrative remedy/reparation. HLRN has developed a variety of tools and techniques for that, including a formal Urgent Action system, an encyclopedic "[Housing and Land Rights Toolkit](#)," a Loss Matrix and methodology for quantifying the costs and losses resulting from a violation, including forced eviction.

The most ambitious tool—both in-house and at the disposal of Members and the public—is the open-access [HLRN Violation Database](#) (VDB). It is an on-line services that contains searchable data on four types of housing and land rights violations: (1) forced eviction, (2) dispossession, (3) damage/destruction and (4) deprivation arising from privatization of housing, land and related public services. (HLRN settled on these four, most-prominent types of violation, in order to keep the VDB as simple and user friendly as possible.) Many of these cases involve two or more of these categories combined, so that the matter for affected people is not only the forced eviction, but the other attendant forms of violation as well. The search function of the VDB produces cases and numerical data on the basis of (1) each of the four types of violation, (2) spans of time, (3) country, (4) region and (5) all types of violation.

Categories of monitored forced evictions include those classified by type of affected persons/groups, mode of eviction and circumstance/context. In all cases, HLRN records the various duty holders/perpetrators (state plus others) of the eviction, which itself represents another category. The proposed line of inquiry in the 10-step monitoring and assessment method of the HLRN Toolkit is the most thorough; however, for various purposes and applications, categories vary. An illustrative list of these categories is below:

By affected persons/groups:

- Indigenous people
- Minority
- Pastoralists
- Refugees/IDPs
- Urban inhabitants
- Women

Mode of eviction (coinciding with other VDB categories):

- As a function of destruction/demolition
- As a function of dispossession/confiscation
- As a result/function of privatization

Circumstances/context:

- Conflict/occupation/war
- Gender inequity/inequality

- Neo-liberal economic or social policy (links to privatization)
- Racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related forms of intolerance (e.g., for Durban Review intervention),
  - o Whose case features/content include:
    - § caste
    - § class/economic status
    - § law-based discrimination
    - § occupation/conflict/war
    - § privatization/corporate responsibility
    - § race/ethnicity
    - § religious
    - § urban segregation
  - o And whose affected groups include:
    - § indigenous peoples
    - § migrants/noncitizens
    - § minority
    - § pastoralists/nomads
    - § refugees/stateless
    - § Roma/Sinti/Travelers
    - § women

## **2. What regions / countries do you cover?**

All regions, classified as the constitutional regions of HIC (Africa (Anglophone), Africa (francophone), Asia, Europe, Latin American/Caribbean, Middle East/North Africa, North America, plus the additional subregional group of Africa (lusophone), and Oceania. Self-identified HIC-HLRN Membership and, thus, potential local sources of eviction monitoring is uneven across regions, and membership is weakest in Oceania and Central Asia, while most numerous in Latin America, Middle East/North Africa and Asia. Our regular desk monitoring is global in scope and sources, but occupies all human resources.

## **3. What are your main sources of information?**

Member organizations, alliances with other NGOs and legal defenders, press, academic sources, internet searches. Constant sources include a variety of outside organizations, including: UN SRs, IDMC, Amnesty International, Inter Press Service, COHRE, ESCR-Net, etc.

## **4. Do you verify reported evictions before recording them, and if so how?**

Yes. Through local Members and contacts, corroborating/triangulating sources, reliance on primary sources as much as possible, local visits, interviews.

## **5. Do you record the information in an electronic database? If yes, what programme do you use, and can you list the fields?**

See answer to 1 above. More detail is available in the [VDB case form](#).

## **6. Do you publish or publicise the results of the monitoring? If yes, in what format and how regularly?**

Occasional publications (country assessments and thematic publications), including constant website information (news, documents, Urgent Actions, on-line publications, VDB). Special reports also for UN political, factual and legal UN human rights bodies, agencies and mechanisms. In addition, since 2005, HIC-HLRN has used its various monitoring processes for a HIC-wide exercise to map the four VDB categories of violations, with a focus on countries where cases of violations, including forced

evictions/displacements constituting violations in the context of (1) natural disaster and (2) conflict, occupation and war.

**7. Do you have a guideline or handbook that describes your monitoring work and, if yes, can this be shared with other organisations?**

Yes. That is one of our core functions. The “Toolkit,” Urgent Action System (with [published guide](#)), the VDB and a recent pamphlet for monitoring MDG 7 (proffering indicators) so as to restore the Goal’s human rights content and relevance. Most HLRN publications include a section on methodology applying the housing rights normative framework, which is most-amply explained in the “Toolkit” (on-line and distributed in CD format). The “Toolkit” promotes monitoring as a problem-solving function, and contains simple monitoring forms and some more-complex tools, like a [quantification matrix](#) for determining the losses and poverty that forced evictions generate. All these resources are shared with other organizations, Members and non-Members.

With the lessons derived from monitoring efforts and methodological development—alas, from local experiences, HLRN is currently developing a guide for monitoring, documenting and presenting evidence that meets ICC standards. The guide, grounded in historic precedents, will promote remedy and reparation for those affected by gross housing and land rights violations that constitute international crimes.

**8. Are you aware of any other organisations doing evictions monitoring.**

Yes. Not all are specialized or consistent, and not all operate with a housing rights framework.

**If yes please list (and provide contact details if you can).**

The list is endless. Much of the social capital of HIC are “potential” monitors. Surely AGFE already knows all the active ones in the field.

**Slum Dwellers International  
Contact: Joel Bolnick**

**1. What types / categories of eviction do you monitor?**

All categories but there tends to be a primary focus on evictions caused by urban upgrading projects – especially transport and infrastructure upgrading

**2. What regions / countries do you cover?**

Africa and Asia mainly. Specifically: SA, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, India, Philippines.

**3. What are your main sources of information?**

Mainly our own SDI affiliates from affected cities/areas.

**4. Do you verify reported evictions before recording them, and if so how?**

We do not record. Where possible we respond, mainly through face to face negotiations with Govts. responsible for these evictions (presently Ghana, Tanzania, Philippines)

**5. Do you record the information in an electronic database? If yes, what programme do you use, and can you list the fields?**

**6. Do you publish or publicise the results of the monitoring? If yes, in what format and how regularly?**

When we do actually document, we tend to publish on our website.

7. Do you have a guideline or handbook which describes your monitoring work, and if yes can this be shared with other organisations?  
No.

8. Are you aware of any other organisations doing evictions monitoring.  
None that you do not know already.

**Human Rights Watch**  
**Contact: Clive Baldwin**

Response awaited

**International Alliance of Inhabitants**  
**Contact: Cesare Ottolini**

1. What types / categories of eviction do you monitor?  
>>>All kind: renters, foreclosures, because megaprojects, etc.

2. What regions / countries do you cover?  
>>> mainly Latina America and the Caribbean, Europe, Africa. Also in Asia.

3. What are your main sources of information?  
>>> Inhabitants organisations.

4. Do you verify reported evictions before recording them, and if so how?  
>>> by the IAI members, the territorial Antennas of Systems of Alert, the responsables of the Zero Evictions Campaigns

5. Do you record the information in an electronic database? If yes, what programme do you use, and can you list the fields?  
>>> online Zero Evictions Alert: data cards

6. Do you publish or publicise the results of the monitoring? If yes, in what format and how regularly?  
>>> online and by territorial and global IAI Newsletters

7. Do you have a guideline or handbook which describes your monitoring work, and if yes can this be shared with other organisations?  
>>> no

8. Are you aware of any other organisations doing evictions monitoring. If yes please list (and provide contact details if you can).  
>>> COHRE, HIC

## **Proposal**

From the responses received it is clear that a number of organisations are recording forced evictions at a regional or global level, for closely related yet differing reasons. Three of these organisations (COHRE, HIC and IAI) are storing the information on specially designed databases. The extent of compatibility between these systems is not known.

Methods used for monitoring vary. The information in question is undoubtedly very useful, and is reaching a number of different target audiences through various advocacy and dissemination strategies.

However the categories of information gathered are not necessarily comparable, as definitions and criteria used in the process seem to differ from organisation to organisation. Verification procedures and levels of authentication also differ. This could lead to contradictory reporting and confusing advocacy.

It would definitely be a good idea to bring the key people involved in this work together to discuss their evictions monitoring work, the methods, criteria and standards applied, and the value and possibility of closer collaboration in data gathering and sharing, including the possible centralisation of at least some of the collected data.

It would not be necessary for all these discussions to be face-to-face. A series of telephone or perhaps video conferences could be sufficient, at least to lay the groundwork for an eventual meeting. The organisations should be encouraged to make their key evictions monitoring staff available for the discussions, which would involve technical details of research processes, database management etc. This can be on the understanding that no decisions will be made at the meetings, and that time will be given between meetings for the organisations to consider any proposals of collaboration, before any binding decisions or undertakings are made.

#### Proposed participants:

The discussions should include representatives of the organisations listed above.

In addition, the AGFE Secretariat should be involved in the meetings, to assist with facilitation and record keeping, and also to inform the meetings of the possibility of UN-HABITAT assistance with any centralised or shared database processes. Lastly, the office of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing should be involved in the discussions, to ensure that their information on complaints and their mission findings are also included in the monitoring system. More organisations could join the process as it develops.

#### Facilitation and support:

The discussions will be convened by AGFE, with support from the Secretariat.

Jean du Plessis, AGFE member  
[jeanduplessis@sai.co.za](mailto:jeanduplessis@sai.co.za)

**AGFE**  
**Teleconference of Eviction Monitoring Organisations**  
**30 January 2009, 11.00 – 12.30 (Nairobi time = GMT +3)**

**Summary**

**Participants**

Representatives of eviction monitoring organisations:

Angie Balata (Housing and Land Rights Network, Habitat International Coalition); Joel Bolnick (Slum Dwellers International); Ken Fernandes (Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, Eviction Watch & Housing Rights Programme); Malavika Vartak (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions)

AGFE Members:

Edesio Fernandes; Jean du Plessis (conference facilitator); Leticia Osorio

UN-HABITAT (Housing Policy Section):

Claudio Acioly (conference moderator); Rasmus Precht

Absent due to connection problems:

Cesare Ottolini (International Alliance of Inhabitants); Yves Cabannes (AGFE Chairperson)

**Background**

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the need for and feasibility of different eviction monitoring organisations to collaborate in order to improve the quality of recorded information, as well as the usability of that information in local, national and international efforts to stem the global tide of evictions. Representatives from the participating organisations were requested to address three questions that were communicated prior to the meeting. The discussion was moderated by Claudio Acioly, and the summary, conclusions and way forward were presented by Jean du Plessis.

**Main outcome**

The summary is structured according to the three questions that participants were asked to address.

***1) Is there a need for eviction monitoring organisations to combine their efforts and / or share their information?***

All representatives as well as the participating AGFE Members and UN-HABITAT staff agreed that there is a need for eviction monitoring organisations to combine their efforts. This would add value to each organisation's work and create synergy in time and resource management and would validate the "competitive advantages" of organisations with regional focus. More specifically, participants made the following points:

- Ken Fernandes emphasised that all eviction monitoring organisations should strengthen one another by working together.
- Malavika Vartak informed the meeting that COHRE will launch a global eviction data base on its website in February or March 2009, covering evictions from the

past 10 years. Data has to be submitted to COHRE, and COHRE uploads it on the website. COHRE's experience shows that one organisation cannot cover all evictions in the world. Therefore, linking COHRE's work with the work of other monitoring organisations would lead to broader coverage.

- Angie Balata briefed the meeting that HIC established its global open access data base 1.5 years ago. HIC verifies data after partners have uploaded it. The data base is hosted by the HIC office in Cairo. The long-term objective is to develop this tool further along the example of the more statistical "Social Watch" reports on specific socio-economic themes that are produced annually by core groups.
- Various participants expressed concern that current efforts by monitoring organisations to establish data bases could be a duplication of efforts. In this sense, Edesio Fernandes warned that the objective must not be to create a new organisation. Rather, there should be a system that enhances the existing monitoring mechanisms by linking them.
- Joel Bolnick shared information on SDIs ongoing informal settlement profiling that is being undertaken in a number of cities and focuses on security of tenure. SDI is willing to make this data available to AGFE and/or any collaborative monitoring.
- Leticia Osorio pointed out the need to establish an eviction early warning system, based on a collaborative monitoring framework.
- Jean du Plessis reiterated that the main objective of eviction monitoring is that the information is available to the affected communities in order to support their efforts to prevent evictions and realise their housing rights. AGFE is a good platform to facilitate such processes.

***2) Given what is being monitored now, is it in your view technically possible to bring the information into a shared database?***

- Most participants suggested that the technical requirements for any joint monitoring system would need to be explored in more detail as a next step.
- Joel Bolnick and Edesio Fernandes recommended that UN-HABITAT should facilitate a unified data base. Joel suggested that it should be managed by an experienced person like Jean du Plessis who knows all the monitoring organisations and has no organisational affinity himself.
- Malavika Vartak voiced out doubts whether it would be technically manageable to have one single global eviction data base.

***3) From your perspective, what would need to be done for the above to become possible?***

- Jean du Plessis concluded that the technically realistic approach would be a simple eviction monitoring tool capturing the essential facts, and could function as a shared global 'clearing house' for eviction monitoring data.
- Claudio Acioly invited the participants to be creative and think of different options ranging from a central unified global data base to a relational base that interlinks the existing data bases.
- Rasmus Precht suggested that UN-HABITAT could initiate a quick assessment of what would be technically possible, in collaboration with the technical data base experts in each organisation.
- Edesio Fernandes drew attention to the need to take the necessary conceptual steps such as agreeing on a clear definition/typology of evictions and the organisations

that monitor them. Ken Fernandes stressed the need to develop a uniform way of monitoring.

- Ken Fernandes and Malavika Vartak highlighted the need for organisations in each country to develop the necessary capacity to do their own monitoring.
- In his summary and conclusions, Jean du Plessis commended the tremendous progress made during this meeting towards a more collaborative approach to eviction monitoring. He noted that Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were not yet part of this process although they had indicated interest.

#### **Agreed next steps**

- It was agreed that the outcome of this meeting should be shared with those organisations and AGFE Members that were not able to attend.
- There is a need for further discussion of options and possible way forward within and among monitoring organisations.
- The technical options for collaborative eviction monitoring need to be further explored.

#### **Tasks**

- Participants: To brief their organisations on the meeting and engage them in discussion on the issues and agreed next steps
- AGFE Secretariat and Jean du Plessis: To write up record of meeting and circulate amongst participants and AGFE members.
- AGFE and UN-HABITAT: To develop technical proposal and circulate
- Jean du Plessis: To brief and follow up with AI and HRW.