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SUMMARY


The substantial three-year grants were intended to support exceptional advances in three areas to “meet key challenges facing the human rights movement”: communications, constituencies, and development. More specifically, the Oak grant was to support catalytic, enduring, and even transformational change because nothing short of that is needed to enable the human rights movement to overcome the challenges before it.

A review of what the Oak grant has helped make possible revealed the following:

Communications and messaging: Individually and as a group the four organizations have established stronger and more sophisticated communications capabilities, developed human rights messages that are more resonant with more audiences, and called attention to many more issues via many more platforms. Human rights messages are reaching more and more diverse audiences as a result.

Constituencies, partnerships, supporters and members: Individually and as a group the organizations have cultivated new audiences, actors, communities, sectors, partners, members and others, and enlisted many of them in human rights action, campaigns, advocacy, and more. Efforts to advance human rights are involving more and more varied participants as a result.

Growth and development: Individually and as a group the organizations are growing and diversifying their sources of income, particularly from individuals. Individual giving is especially important both for the unrestricted income it provides as well as an indicator of citizen engagement in human rights, or at least it could be.

The catalytic nature of the changes introduced is evident. For one thing, as anticipated, advances in communications enabled greater and more effective reach to new audiences. For another, as these audiences have become more knowledgeable about and engaged with the respective organizations, many have also become donors.

The review revealed other developments that attest to the catalytic and long-term nature of the interventions that include cultural shifts, shifts in thinking, greater integration and breaking down of silos of various kinds, among others. Two additional developments are especially noteworthy: greater appreciation of the importance and power of the grassroots, and greater invocation of the need to strengthen the broader human rights movement.

As the four organizations continue on their new courses, and they process what they learn and adjust accordingly, the number of people who are better informed about and contribute in some way to efforts to advance human rights can be expected to multiply.

Oak Foundation Learning

As for grantees’ views on the Oak grant and the Request for Proposals (RFP) process:
• Staff and board interviewees concur that the pillars selected by Oak are indeed the critical ones for the human rights movement.
• Grantees value the Oak grant not only for helping to build critical capacities but also for enabling them to explore new ideas, take risks, and make change that require some time to show full results.
• Several interviewees credit the grant with stirring leadership to think more boldly and pursue new approaches. However, most interviewees feel that the grant amount, though substantial, was insufficient to support transformational change.
• In all cases interviewees value the relationship with and input from Oak as much as the grant, and view the foundation as a particularly knowledgeable and engaged donor who understands the human rights movement.
• Finally, interviewees had no complaints regarding the RFP and application process.
1.0 BACKGROUND

In 2018, the Oak Foundation made tie-off grants to Amnesty International, Fund for Global Human Rights (FGHR), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR).¹

The four organizations received sizeable three-year grants to boost their ability to “meet key challenges facing the human rights movement” in three areas:

- **Communications and messaging**: re-energize human rights and human rights values in public discourse, advocacy and campaigning;
- **Constituencies and partnerships**: build and mobilize broader constituencies and new allies, including through growth in members and supporters;
- **Growth and development**: achieve sustainable growth to optimum scale to include new sources of funding and reduced reliance on traditional Global North donors.

In brief, the “funding should help address those challenges by influencing how you work: expanding your supporter base; communicating with and further mobilising that base; and how, in turn, that base will influence your eventual revenue model.”

To further distinguish the grant from previous Oak funding, the Request for Proposals (RFP) stipulated that the “exceptional support is not intended for a ‘business as usual’ renewal” but rather “to provide catalytic support to assist in the realisation of your transformational ambitions.” A reviewer of the original grant proposals articulated the prospects well: “I believe that the tie-off grants are likely to succeed in unleashing a positive ripple effect that will help mainstream important innovations in human rights strategies and tactics.”²

Oak retained this reviewer to assess how well the grants have supported efforts toward transformational change. The grant reports provided ample evidence that the four organizations had used the grant monies well, carried out excellent and vital work, and made important strides in the three areas. This review is intended instead to assess whether the grant has also enabled catalytic, enduring, and possibly transformational change at even this decidedly early stage.

Oak contracted this review for the purpose of learning to inform future initiatives by Oak and that will benefit the human rights movement.

The report describes for each grantee the relevant change Oak supported, followed by a discussion of the implications for the broader human rights movement. The report concludes with grantee feedback and this reviewer’s recommendations for future Oak initiatives of this kind.

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¹ I wish to acknowledge the tremendous assistance extended by the four organizations in the course of this assignment, especially Kristine Jensen (HRW), Tracey Mallinson (Amnesty), Rona Peligal (FGHR), and Jennifer Sime (PHR). I greatly appreciated their help, patience, and graciousness.
2.0 METHODOLOGY

The assessment combined a desk review of grant materials with semi-structured interviews. The materials include the original grant application and three annual progress reports as well as Oak commentary on each. In some cases additional organizational materials supplemented the review (see Appendix A for materials reviewed). A total of 45 interviews with 53 stakeholders were conducted with staff, board members, supporters, donors and media (see Appendix B for interviews conducted).

A more complete discussion of methodology is provided in Appendix C: Methodology. The discussion of transformational change specifically, which framed the grantee reviews, follows.

Transformational change

The grant was intended to support efforts toward transformational change, because nothing short of that will enable the human rights movement to meet the challenges before it. To identify such potential or actual change this reviewer relied on the following guideposts.

First, change toward transformation represents some departure from business as usual of what an organization does, even while that may remain important and needed. Thus the review sought an identifiable “before” and “since” the Oak grant. Staff’s reaction to the change introduced proved a useful indicator of the newness of the change and how much it departs from usual business.

Second, the review sought change that is catalytic in some way, stimulating change within or across pillars and even organization wide. Indeed, transformations invariably involve many internal shifts and adjustments in structure, content, relationships, culture, thinking, strategies, among other things.

Third, transformation suggests enduring change well beyond the life of the grant. The review sought indicators of an organization’s long-term commitment to the change in, for example, its articulation of the rationale, its investments in, and its mainstreaming of the change, among other things.

There are many intervening and confounding factors that render a straightforward assessment of Oak’s contribution difficult, three of which are particularly significant.

The Grant: Although focused on three specific pillars, the grant was in the form of operating support and thus generally not tracked by the grantees. In some cases grantees were able to point to specific ways in which the grant was used. In others, it was not possible to isolate Oak’s contribution from that of other grants. Another complicating factor is the significance of the grant amounts to the organizations. The grants were exceptional for Oak as well as in comparison to three of the penultimate grants (see Appendix D for grant amounts). However, the weight in relation to organizational budgets ranged from 1.6% to 8.3%, as has the grant’s contribution and impact.

Time: Oak recognizes that three years is not enough for transformational change. However, it should be enough to show evidence in that direction. Of course in every case plans proposed in
2018 had changed by 2021. In some cases implementation has only recently started due to unavoidable delays related to hiring, preparations, adjustments and learning. In some cases, however, thinking that began well before 2018 was actualized owing to the Oak grant.

**Context:** The environment itself can be a powerful catalyst for change, even transformation. A number of such catalytic forces influenced, shaped and altered how the four organizations worked and what they did, particularly in 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic impeded some plans of every organization, generated new and momentous ones for some (Amnesty, PHR) and powerfully affirmed those of another (FGHR). The emergence of protest movements, including in the US, was also a positive catalytic force (HRW, PHR). Parsing out the contribution of the Oak grant from the consequential shifts engendered by such contextual forces on the thinking, operations and work of the four organizations is another challenge.

As the review reveals, there are yet other factors that affected the four organizations’ process of change. Pursuit of transformational change is particularly challenging for membership organizations (e.g., Amnesty). Grantmaking organizations proceed with care because of implications for grantees (e.g., FGHR). For relatively small organizations, catching up is transformational (e.g., PHR). And change that prominent global organizations undergo can have momentous implications for all concerned (e.g., HRW).

### 3.0 GRANTEE REVIEWS

The review discusses actual or potential transformative change supported by Oak, while addressing Oak questions and concerns raised in the grantee reports, particularly in the End of Grant Report (EGR).

Each review begins with a brief description of the initial grant objectives and how the Oak grant was used. The review then describes significant, catalytic and/or structural change the grant enabled, either directly or indirectly. An attempt is made to include:

- Rationale or impetus for the change
- What is new about the change and how it differs from the old
- Nature of the change: new means, content, thinking, assumptions, culture, practice, etc.
- Investment in the change
- Integration or mainstreaming of the change
- Outcomes so far

#### 3.1 Amnesty International

#### 3.2 Human Rights Watch

**Grant objectives:** HRW would reach the “persuadable middle” by broadening the appeal of human rights through the investigation of issues that resonate with more and different people, and by reaching the public through enhanced media. HRW would also forge new and creative alliances with diverse constituencies, both within and beyond the traditional human rights...
movement, and deepen its local relationships, particularly in the Global South. The organization did not set out an explicit use of the Oak grant in the area of development but expected that expansion to new audiences would generate new giving.

Notable transformations that include “fundamental changes in the culture” are underway at HRW, many of which are beyond the areas supported by Oak and thus outside the purview of this review. The Oak grant has, however, contributed to transformational developments in two areas: communications, and collaboration and partnerships.

Engaging in the digital space

HRW is indeed taking human rights to broader swaths of the public. Its attention to new issues is covered well in the grant reports. Particularly significant is the organization’s new approach to and use of media to reach and engage the public on both new and old human rights issues.

The communications department’s shift from being “a service to our program and research colleagues” to becoming a strategic driver of the organization’s communications is arguably the single most consequential, even catalytic change. Communications had been designed for the purpose of conveying to policymakers the findings and recommendations of months-long in-depth investigations. New audiences required new means, language, and delivery.

This required HRW to adjust to audiences that have short attention spans, want information quickly, use a variety of platforms to access information and on increasingly smaller screens. The organization now deploys a wide range of communication tools, publishes on all the media platforms, produces content that is more accessible, emotionally appealing and visual, has replaced technical and legalistic language with values-laden content and storytelling, and has expanded its foreign language capacity. Most importantly, the organization now engages in “two-way conversations, not just declamation.” Together these are enabling the organization to take human rights to considerably more people, and more effectively.

Historically, HRW communication was largely “episodic” and revolved around the release of its reports. The organization now communicates daily on a diverse array of issues and now marshals its knowledge and expertise to provide human rights commentary without first conducting months-long investigations. These shifts are enabling HRW to meet people where their attention is, be it Ukraine, sports events, or Britney Spears, which the organization used to highlight its work on male conservatorship in the Middle East.

Critically, initial staff concerns regarding the encapsulation of a 100-page report into a 30 second video clip have been overcome. As the communications department demonstrated the value of these approaches, “[staff] have moved from concern and skepticism to demand that we cannot fill…Showing results drives the cultural change.”

With its expanded online audience, HRW has entered the digital activism sphere. Critical of “clickivism,” communications work with research teams to craft impact-driven advocacy campaigns that provide digital activists the information they need to advocate themselves in their countries. Although it is still early to know what digital activists can achieve with the information they receive, the signs so far are encouraging.
The organization has contracted and awaits the findings of an external evaluation of its public engagement. Several indicators point to promising outcomes. External interviewees commented positively on the increased volume, improved accessibility, and breadth of issues and countries featured in the organization’s recent communications. Younger audiences (18-24), a key target of digital activism, grew from 26% of HRW’s audience in 2020 to 33% in 2021. In 2021, HRW’s non-English audience reached over 20% for the first time.

Transforming relationships with partners and collaboration

HRW’s outreach to new constituencies, in particular faith-based groups, environmental activists, medical community, and domestic violence groups, is important and described in grant reports. The organization’s investment in and commitment to more effective partnering with both new and old constituencies is genuinely transformational.

The Collaboratory (Collab) is a HRW initiative that is most directly tied to the Oak grant. Launched in 2021, this two-year pilot is devoted to testing models of collaboration with a particular focus on non-traditional human rights actors. The aim is to further institutionalize HRW’s “approach to external partnerships and strengthen the broader movement for human rights.” HRW’s Deputy Executive Director and Chief Programs Officer, Tirana Hassan, oversees this initiative, indicating the importance HRW attributes to the Collab.

Partnering is not new for HRW, but its current attention to collaboration and partnerships is. Interviewees indicated that the development had been “bubbling up from the bottom” of the organization for some time and reflected what staff heard in the field, particularly from partners, as well as donors and others. Only with the “change at the top” has this awareness translated into a commitment “to more deeply embed partnerships in HRW work.” In assessing the effectiveness of its collaborations HRW now includes what they contribute to the broader human rights movement.

Explaining the impetus for this development, interviewees pointed to a changing world in which social movements and mass protests are effectively asserting new forms of power. Failing to engage effectively with rising movements and local activist leaders risked rendering HRW irrelevant in the future. HRW also recognized that bringing its access to and influence with grasstops together with partnerships with grassroots efforts could deliver greater impact.

HRW’s commitment to new bases of partnering is evident in attendant changes that include starting point of all projects and plans is mapping of the ecosystem and defining partnerships; reducing the number of projects staff work on “because partnerships take time”; and a multi-

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3 Several HRW interviewees, including the external consultant hired for the partnership work, referred to the Oak Foundation’s 2018 report on HRW. Clearly Oak’s earlier grant supporting HRW’s “internationalization” had transformative effects by elevating and magnifying voices closer to the ground, both in-country staff and their partners, and contributed to the powerful “bubbling up.”

4 “The collaboratory 1.0”

5 “Begin a project or plan by mapping what partners (defined as above) are doing, and locating your planned intervention within that ecosystem of change-makers. Situate your project’s role within the broader movement for change on your issue, and design the impact you wish to have accordingly.” Ibid., p. 2.
phased gradual and thoughtful mainstreaming across the organization by 2024; among other things.

The initiative has three parts: 1) ongoing change in the organization’s culture around partners to infuse “values of humility, impact, de-colonization, strategy and sustainability” and learning from failure; 2) systematizing the new approach for consistency and accountability; and 3) removing or mitigating internal obstacles to partnerships, such as those related to the legal department. An 11-page staff “Partnerships Tool Kit 1.0” provides extensive guidance on forging partnerships on new bases.6

The long-term commitment to this approach is apparent in HRW hiring. An interviewee noted that upcoming hires, including for the heads of three significant divisions, will “bring in people who see HRW’s work oriented toward the broader movement for change.” Another interviewee echoed that, “willingness to work in a different way is key.” And yet another interviewee noted that the “change in the organizational culture” around partnerships is one from which “there is no turning back.”

HRW partners in two very different partnership models who were interviewed exemplified the new approach. In one case, a coalition, HRW is never mentioned in public advocacy or communications. In the other, a collaboration between HRW and two other organizations marshaled the unique expertise of each organization to produce a ground breaking report that expanded the horizons of all three collaborators and tackled a new area for human rights.

That HRW now pursues partnerships with a focus on what the movement needs, and works with partners “without having to call attention to ourselves” is a notable and consequential advance with enormous implications. Whatever the impetus, the development is transformational for HRW and potentially also for the human rights movement more broadly.

Growing income

As anticipated, HRW has experienced an increase in more modest levels of giving through social media marketing as a result of its expansion to new audiences. The organization’s US direct marketing is already showing results, including an “unprecedented response” to its online appeal for Ukraine, which raised $200K in its initial three weeks.

6 The commitment is evident throughout: “Objectives and theories of change related to partnership work should be as explicit and rigorous as they are for publications, advocacy and other kinds of work.” Guidance includes numerous ways to strengthen local partners, including “referring journalists to local partners…rather than taking the interview yourself” as this can “help partners boost their profile, establish credibility and facilitate fundraising.” Similarly, “Where possible, provide partners with contact information for advocacy targets or their staff members to pave the way for local actors to create independent relationships with advocacy targets.”
3.3 Physicians for Human Rights

3.4 Fund for Global Human Rights

3.5 Implications for the Human Rights Movement

The significant, consequential and even transformational changes the four organizations have introduced are of value to the broader human rights movement.

Communications and messaging: Individually and as a group the four organizations have established stronger and more sophisticated communications capabilities, developed human rights messages that are more resonant with more audiences, and called attention to many more issues via many more platforms. Human rights messages are reaching more and more diverse audiences as a result.

Constituencies, partnerships, supporters and members: Individually and as a group the organizations have cultivated new audiences, actors, communities, sectors, partners, members and others, and enlisted many of them in human rights action, campaigns, advocacy, and more. Efforts to advance human rights are involving more and more varied participants as a result.

Growth and development: Individually and as a group the organizations are growing and diversifying their sources of income, particularly from individuals. Individual giving is especially important both for the unrestricted income it provides as well as an indicator of citizen engagement in human rights, or at least it could be.

The catalytic nature of the changes introduced is evident. For one thing, as anticipated, advances in communications enabled greater and more effective reach to new audiences. As these audiences have become more knowledgeable about and engaged with the respective organizations, many have also become donors. As an interviewee put it: “That’s the pool you go fishing in, and we never had that pool before, and now we do.”

The review revealed other developments that attest to the catalytic and enduring nature of the interventions that include cultural shifts, shifts in thinking, greater integration and breaking down of silos of various kinds, among others. Two additional developments are especially noteworthy.

Relationship to the grassroots: The greater recognition of the vital importance and power of the grassroots and their movements across the world, including in the US, is a notable development. (For the Fund, it is further validation of what it recognized from its inception.) The organizations’ greater and more direct engagement with emergent protest and other movements has stimulated new bases and forms of partnerships that better serve and stand to strengthen the broader human rights movement. For one thing it has engendered greater humility on the part

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Additional evidence of the expansion of reach is found the partnerships that they formed with outside experts from a range of expertise with which not dealt with before. Interviewees described the tensions and learning involved in partnering with scientists, journalists, digital specialists, and others. For their part, several partners indicated that the partnership was their first with a human rights organization, suggesting another way that the grantees have taken human rights to new places.
of INGOs, which makes for better partners; for another, it strengthens the all-important linkages from local to global.

Relationship to the human rights movement: In the course of the staff interviews, this reviewer heard a distinctly surprising (and heartening) number of mentions of other human rights organizations and colleagues as well as the broader human rights movement. The extent to which interviewees invoked the importance of strengthening the movement, and cooperation and exchange with counterparts in other organizations, was notable.

Looking ahead, three questions loom large and warrant research.

**Whom exactly are the organizations reaching?** The four grantees set out to reach and engage “the persuadable middle,” “the movable middle,” “non-traditional actors,” and others, both those individuals who are unaware of or unmoved by human rights as well as those who are drawn to populist-authoritarians hostile to human rights. Each organization has defined its target audiences. Through its partnership with VICE, for example, Amnesty explicitly sought to reach “hyper-local culturists.”\(^8\) Exactly who is being reached – natural potential supporters or unusual participants – warrants research and what is learned needs to be shared across the movement.\(^9\)

**Are the advances sustainable and scalable?** The interventions that Oak and other funders supported are costly. Sustaining the more sophisticated and professional capacities, systems, contracts, hires, and the like, means even larger organization budgets moving forward. Moreover, to meet the challenges ahead, these and other inputs need to be scaled, requiring even more funding.\(^10\) There are many excellent initiatives, pilots, approaches, ideas, and more, but not many funders ready to carry them forward. Arguably, the single most critical need is for human rights advocacy within the philanthropic sector. There is an urgent need to both expand the pool of foundations that fund human rights and to share with newcomers the lessons of the past several decades of human rights funding, i.e., the imperative of multi-year, operating support that provides maximum flexibility to organizations.

**How will what is learned and gained be shared across the human right movement?** The outlays that made the above advances possible will remain out of the reach for the vast majority of human rights organizations in the world. But the knowledge, data, findings, strategies and more can be shared. Queried about how they are making what they learn more widely available, interviewees mentioned posting reports online and exchanging information with counterparts in other organizations. This is not enough. Mechanisms that enable structured and systematic

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\(^8\) See footnote #3.

\(^9\) HRW has contracted an external evaluation of its public engagement. The evaluation is likely to be extremely valuable, especially if it includes an assessment of how HRW is doing on this claim: “Many societies are so narrowly divided that by moving just 5 to 10 percent of the public, we can help create the impetus to redirect governments toward a rights-respecting approach.” (HRW, PPR, Y1)

\(^10\) Several interviewees mentioned the need to purchase more ads. Describing how much more is needed, an FGHR interviewee shared that it had spent about $30K on digital ads, which was 10% of the amount a comparable (and named) organization spent in the same period.
dissemination and sharing of learnings across the human rights movement are needed so the benefits do not remain with the well-established and well-funded organizations.

4.0 OAK FOUNDATION LEARNING

Staff and board interviewees were invited to share candid feedback about the grant experience, including the pillars, framing, and RFP process. The following summarizes their feedback and suggestions for what Oak might do differently with a similar initiative in the future, followed by this reviewer’s observations and recommendations.

Interviewees’ feedback

The three pillars: With regard to the cogency of the three pillars, the consensus view is that Oak “chose the right three things” and “it was right on.” There were, however, two interesting outliers, both board members. One interviewee recommended that in the future Oak remain open to “other pillars,” which might see applicants deliver “something exceptional...[that] could blow everyone’s mind,” rather than “try[ing] to fit into the set [of three].” And another interviewee encouraged Oak to “go even more bold” and help “build organizations that are capable of doing that,” without fear that they will lose their funding if they do.

The Grant: Interviewees appreciated that the grant was made as operating support and the absence of “a narrow definition” of the pillars, which maximized flexibility. Describing what the grant enabled, interviewees shared that: “Oak has had a pretty profound impact on how we think about ourselves and talk about ourselves”; “it allow[ed] us to think in different ways in how to engage an audience”; and “the ratification...of our doing something risky and that you’ve convinced someone else that it’s important, that’s helpful.” Interviewees also valued the “far-sighted thinking” and give Oak “a lot of credit for doing...[what] was a risky thing to do, all about the back of the office stuff where there is not much glory.” Describing Oak as “brave, to invest in something and wait to see if developed,” an interviewee noted that, “this [grant] isn’t as easy to judge [as others],” given that it must await “10 years after the fact” to judge. Another interviewee saw the Oak grant as part of an effort by “a handful of other foundations [who] are pushing in the same direction,” with “a broader interest in how INGOs work with the movement, how do you broaden the constituency, and communicate better.” For this interviewee, the benefit of the Oak grant lies in that combined effort by “informed people who follow the movement well, trying to figure out the next step,” adding that “that intentional contribution [is] more important than the dollars themselves,” at least for that particular organization.

Size of the grant: Grantees were uniformly grateful for the grant, but several described the amount as insufficient, including one interviewee who noted “this grant was enormously helpful.” Other interviewees concurred: “Transformation takes a lot,” and work on these particular three pillars “is expensive”; “To do work that broadens the constituency is resource intensive”; and “It’s not as much money as [Oak] thought it was, [and] it’s not transformational when you’re trying to move an organization.” One interviewee noted further that the grant amount “would have had to be a much larger to help us make the kind of investment that would be needed to compensate for losing that large general support.”
Stirring leadership to do things differently: Across the board, interviewees ascribed to the grant value in stimulating new and bolder thinking: “It can be helpful when a big donor like Oak pushes the leadership to do things differently; to help you move in a new direction can be positive, as long as it’s not too directive.” Several interviewees concurred: “That kind of process forces you to sit down and think about that framework, and creates a momentum for that kind of thinking, and the resources that can bring it to fruition”; “It has animated the board and other people in the organization to think on a grander scale”; and “it gave us the confidence to take some risk and in making changes.” Echoing these sentiments, an interviewee elaborated: “We never have the money or discipline to take the time to research what’s working and what’s not,” but the grant allowed the organization “to take that time and understand that stuff.” Indeed, as another interviewee noted, without the “discretionary funds for investment, it’s hard to convince the board and even the ED to go out on the limb,” and the Oak grant enabled the organization to do just that.

Relationship with Oak: Interviewees hold Oak in high regard and described the foundation (particularly the IHRP director) as “smart,” “knowledgeable,” and “an engaged donor” that understands the human rights movement, and with whom “communication is always excellent.” As a clear reflection of their regard for Oak, several interviewees referred to specific conversations with or reports, feedback or recommendations from Oak, which they valued.

The application process: Interviewees had no problem with the application process and found the “proposal writing process reasonable.” One interviewee, who “kind of liked the process” and “didn’t even mind the competition,” especially appreciated the opportunity to talk to the Trustees in person. However, two interviewees referred more broadly to work with Oak as particularly time consuming. One described Oak as the most demanding of its donors in terms of the amount of information and time involved to respond to questions: “Of all the donors we deal with, Oak is the most intense donor, both in terms of evaluation and reporting and the commitment the staff has to get Oak all the information that it wants.” Referring to institutional funders more generally, another interviewee from the same organization noted that while “it’s so helpful for us to get that feedback,” the “grant specific evaluations are also time consuming. It makes a lot of sense, and we really value the feedback and opportunity to engage, but it takes time.”

Recommendations

The grant amounts were substantial but appear to not have been sufficient. A possible future adjustment might be for Oak to fund exceptional advances in one pillar but encourage applicants to approach the design in ways that will have impact or stimulate developments and results in other pillars. That would also encourage grantees to think in catalytic terms, and help Oak capture the intended catalytic affects of interventions it supports.

The review surfaced questions that deserve research: How necessary is specialized in-house capacity for each individual organization? Are there ways to meet the need for pricey tech upgrades and specialists for several organizations at the same time? Research may uncover more cost-effective ways to ensure organizations access the supports they need without having to construct them in-house.

Three suggestions follow regarding the grant application.
First, the application question (#8), which requests that applicants describe the “the level of cooperation with other organisations and networks and explain how this cooperation helps achieve your goals” is for the most part not generating useful responses. The responses indicate that applicants largely treat “other” as wider but still inner circles, i.e., their donors, partners, grantees. A question is needed to capture how they locate their organization and work within the wider human rights movement. The question could encourage applicants to explicitly situate their organization and contributions within that larger effort and articulate the nature of their relationship and responsibility to the broader human rights movement.

Second, for ease of comparison over time, Oak is encouraged to request that grantees use the same metrics in the EGR that they used in the Grant Applications Form (GAF). Metrics may need adjustment or even be abandoned, but it remains useful for the grantee to speak to the original metric directly.

Third, application questions that are conducive to stimulating and capturing thinking about systems and processes and less on activities are needed.

Finally, the RFP contains a somewhat mixed message. While requesting that applicants avoid applying the grant to “business as usual,” it also requires that the “focus should be a continuation of the work that you have traditionally pursued with Oak...” Although this does not appear to have posed any difficulty for this round of grants and grantees, it does potentially constrain and suggests that processes and structures and the like can be transformed without change in substance or content, which is questionable.
5.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Materials Reviewed

For each grantee:
1. Grant Applications Form (GAF)
2. Grant Recommendation Form (GAR)
3. Project Progress Report (PPR, Y1) (PPR, Y2)
4. End of Grant Report (EGR)

Amnesty International

Standing for Humanity (June 2020)
Chair presentation to Senior Management (video)

Fund for Global Human Rights


Human Rights Watch

Partnerships Tool Kit 1.0, December 2021
The Collaboratory 1.0 (concept)(no date)
Partnership presentation (PPT)(no date)

Physicians for Human Rights

Development Report – Digital Fundraising (PPT)
Appendix B: Interviews Conducted

Amnesty International

Staff
Jen Corlew, Global Programme Director, Marketing and Communications
Beatrice Vaugrante, Programme Director, Global Movement Building
Christoffer Holm, Programme Director, Global Director Fundraising Support

Board
Anjhula Mya Singh Bais, Board Chair
Fabiola Arce, International Board of Directors

Donors
Maria Koulouris, 11thHour Project, Director, Human Rights Program
Negeen Darani, 11thHour Project, Vice President of Programs & Emerging Strategies

Members
Areeasha Shahid, Amnesty Member (Pakistan)
Zulu Anyaogu, Amnesty Member (Nigeria)
Andrea Rosales, Amnesty Member (Honduras)

Media
Adam Stimpson, VICE, Commercial Director

Fund for Global Human Rights

Staff
Regan Ralph, President
David Mattingly, Vice President for Programs
Rona Peligal, Vice President of Development
Robin Pierro, Communications Director

Board
Ed McKinley, Board, Finance Chair
Chris Canavan, Board chair

Donors
Amira El-Sayed, Luminate, Principal
Ross MacLaren, C.S. Mott Foundation, Program officer

Supporters and Grantees
Victoria Ohaeri, Spaces for Change (Nigeria)(Grantee)
Jayshree Satpute, Nazdeek (India)(Grantee)
EJ Jacobs, Philanthropy Consultant, Ambassadors’ Circle member

Media
Julian Richards, OpenDemocracy, Managing Editor
Nina Sandhaus-Martin, Scott & Co, Communications Consultant

**Human Rights Watch**

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Ken Roth, Executive Director
Wisla Heneghan, Deputy Executive Director (Operations)
Tirana Hassan, Deputy Executive Directors (Programs)

Mei Fong, Chief Communications Officer
Stephen Northfield, Deputy Chief Communications Officer

Emma Daly, Head of the Collaboratory
Sari Bashi, Special Advisor to the Program Office

Michele Alexander, Former Chief Development Officer
Laura Boardman, Acting Chief Development Officer
Kristine Jensen, Managing Director, Foundations & Program Liaison Office

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Catherine Zennström, Board Vice Chair (Chair & Co-Founder, Zennström Philanthropies)

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Karen Loblay, Director, Just World Investments Pty Ltd

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André Guimarães, Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia (IPAM), Executive Director (Brazil)
Khelef Khalifa, Okoa Mombassa Coalition (Chairperson, Muslims for Human Rights)(Kenya)

**Physicians for Human Rights**

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John Mix, Chief Marketing and Development Officer
Karen Naimer, Director of Programs

Claudia Rader, Senior Communications Manager
Hannah Dunphy, Digital Communications Manager

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Ray Happy, Board Member, Development Committee Chair

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Gregory Whitehead, Major Donor

Supporters
Altaf Saadi, MGH and Harvard University (supporter)
Michelle Munyikwa, Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania & Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (supporter)

Media
Deborah Amos, NPR, Journalist
Appendix C: Methodology

The assessment combined a desk review of grant materials with semi-structured interviews. The materials include the original grant application and three annual progress reports as well as Oak commentary on each. In some cases additional organizational materials supplemented the review. A total of 45 interviews with 53 stakeholders were conducted with staff, board members, supporters, donors and media.

This reviewer began by identifying from the grant applications and annual progress reports the Oak-supported work and outcomes for each of the three pillars.

Staff and board interviews were conducted to identify what the Oak grant had enabled and to assess its “newness,” catalytic effects, and likely longevity. Questions for external stakeholders – supporters, donors and media – were designed to capture stakeholder-specific perspectives on the organization in the relevant area(s). In most cases, however, external stakeholders though enthusiastic and insightful, did not follow the organizations closely enough to provide input to assess transformational change or potentials. This suggests a flaw in the selection of interviewees, for which this reviewer is responsible (more below).

To avoid leading interviewees, interview questions for staff and board members avoided using “transformation” and “catalytic” and instead used “significant” and “consequential” to refer to the kind of change about which the interviewer sought to learn. However, several interviewees themselves used “transformational” to describe changes or outcomes.

Also to avoid leading interviewees, staff and board interviewees were first asked to describe the changes they considered “significant or consequential,” and only then which of those changes they attribute to the Oak grant.

Challenges

The four organizations experienced tremendous staff turnover during the grant period (2018-2021). As a result, several interviewees were too new to provide observations or insights about what the grant had enabled, and certainly could not comment on changes “before” and “since” the grant.

Despite numerous attempts, this reviewer was unable to conduct three interviews, interestingly all with traditional media (a news anchor, newspaper editor, and a journalist). The one reporter who did agree to an interview shared an important insight regarding the change in the media’s relationship to human rights organizations since organizations have been able to self-publish on websites and online.

Identifying the appropriate interviewees for “supporter” stakeholders proved a challenge. Thus this set of interviews is a mix of individual donors, project partners, members, and grantees. In Amnesty’s case, the Oak grant supported the International Secretariat, whose relationship to supporters and members is only indirect through sections.

To gauge the extent to which the grantees have actually reached new constituencies, new donors and new media, they were asked to suggest interviewees who were new to the
organization, i.e., who began to work with, fund or report on the organization since 2018. Identifying possible interviewees who match this criterion produced very mixed results. In hindsight, the request was flawed. To comment on change over time, it would have been better to interview those with long experience with the organization.

Finally, with its narrow focus on Oak-supported transformational change, the review does not do justice either to the tremendous work of the four organizations over this period or the many important observations shared by external interviewees.
### Appendix D: Grant Amounts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>Penultimate Oak Grant</th>
<th>Final Oak Grant (2018)</th>
<th>As % of Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amnesty International</td>
<td>$1.2 million / 2 years (2014)</td>
<td>$3.6 million / 3 years</td>
<td>1.6% of overall 7.2% of IS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund for Global Human Rights</td>
<td>$500 thousand / 1 year (2017)</td>
<td>$4.4 million / 3 years</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>59% ($2.585 M million) for grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
<td>$917 thousand / 9 months (2017)</td>
<td>$4.0 million / 3 years</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians for Human Rights</td>
<td>$1.5 million / 3 years (2014)</td>
<td>$3.0 million / 2 years (per PHR request)</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>