

# CONCEPT NOTE



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Human Rights Measurement Initiative (HRMI – pronounced Hermi) is an international collective of people who share a vision of making the world a better place by producing and effectively disseminating simple, transparent, accurate, accessible, independent metrics of human rights.

We aim to make human rights abuses – and good practices – more transparent, in order to inspire more ethical behaviour by states and other actors. HRMI is unique in three ways:

- It will be comprehensive, covering the key rights listed in the International Bill of Human Rights. Thus it will provide quality new metrics for elements of civil and political rights that are currently unmeasured, and improve existing measures for economic and social rights.
- It will be highly transparent, and fully independent of governments.
- It puts collaboration at the heart of its operating model, aiming to facilitate more strategic collective impact to advance human rights.

HRMI is hosted by Motu Economic and Public Policy Research, an independent not-for-profit research institute based in Wellington, New Zealand.

HRMI is currently embarking on the pilot phase of the project, and is seeking supporters who will partner with us, to facilitate a step-change for the better in the lives of billions of people.

*“We make the road by walking” – Paolo Freire*

## WHY DOES THE WORLD NEED HRMI?

Human rights abuses are rife around the world. As a result, billions of people are unable to live their lives with dignity or achieve their potential. Even in the best performing countries, some groups continue to face systemic discrimination, including inadequate access to education, housing, health and justice. Yet – despite the fact that we live among the explosion of ‘big data’ - the world does not yet have a simple, comprehensive and accurate way to summarise and monitor human rights performance. Existing measures are piecemeal and of varying quality, and therefore not widely used.

Many individuals and organisations are doing incredibly valuable work to improve enjoyment of human rights. However, the combined efficacy of these efforts is curtailed by a lack of quality cross-country data. This impedes our collective ability to systematically identify what works and what doesn’t. It also makes it harder to hold governments accountable to their citizens. Through a combination of innovation and building on existing efforts, we aim to produce a comprehensive suite of metrics, enabling much more effective collaboration and evidence-driven advocacy.

## WHY HASN’T SOMEONE ALREADY DONE THIS?

In order to be credible, measures of human rights for countries need to be produced independently of governments. This rules out production by bodies such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), who are constrained by the political sensitivities of their member countries. In a world where most statistics are funded by governments, funding independent measures becomes a significant challenge.

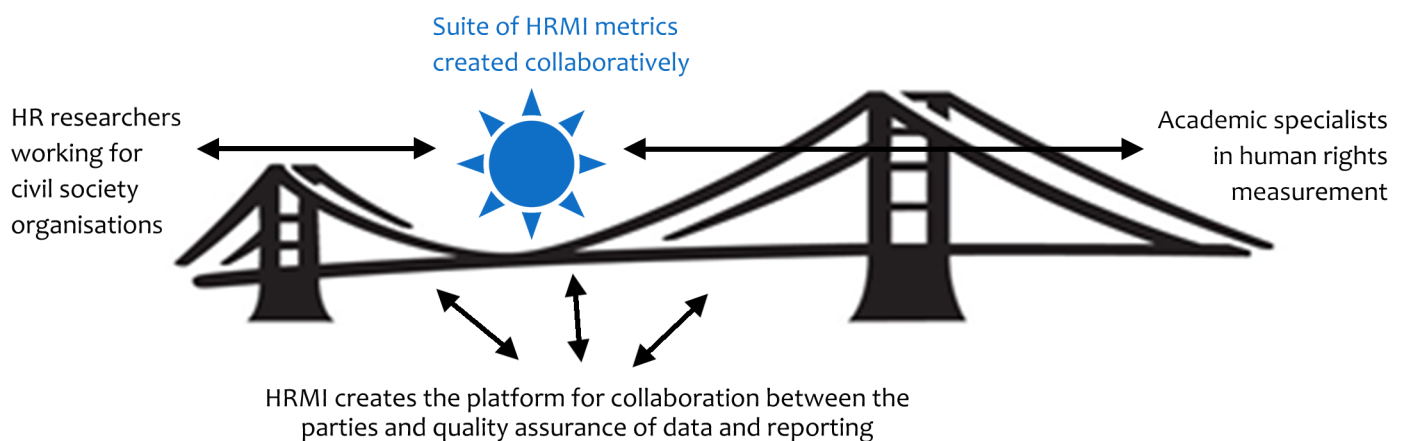
In addition, creating good measures of human rights is not easy – particularly for civil and political rights. Our proposed methodology draws on the pre-existing network of human rights organisations and specialist researchers around the world. However, it requires a level of buy-in and collaboration that is yet to be proven.

In seeking to create a complete picture of human rights, we are not starting from scratch. In the area of economic, social and cultural rights, the Social and Economic Rights Fulfilment (SERF) Index meets our quality criteria of being simple, transparent, accurate, accessible and independent of governments. These measures are based on publicly-available socio-economic data and have received very positive reviews from the human rights community. However, they are not yet widely used and are in jeopardy of being discontinued. We are working with the SERF authors to develop better data visualisation tools, bring this data under the HRMI umbrella, and promote their use. We will also look to expand and further develop these measures.

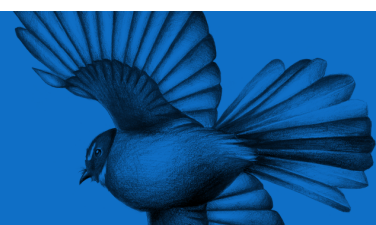
The biggest data gap is in the area of civil and political rights. The best known measures in academic circles (CIRI) have been discontinued and two of the former CIRI Directors are working with HRMI to help develop better measures. The business sector typically turn to other readily-available measures, such as the Freedom House measures of political rights and civil liberties. However, the methodology for producing these measures is not transparent, indicators at a more granular level are not available, and Freedom House is partly funded by the US government (contributing to a perception that these measures may be politically or culturally biased). By contrast, HRMI measures will provide a more detailed understanding of the current situation and trends, and, due to our independence and collaborative methodology, be more easily understood and trusted.

## HOW DOES HRMI WORK?

HRMI exists to support and enable better data measurement and collection – drawing on the network of human rights researchers around the world to leverage information that is currently inaccessible to most people, adding an overlay of academic rigor and meaningful reporting.



**Timescale:** We are currently embarking on the pilot phase of the project, aiming to complete prototyping and testing of our new civil and political rights (CPR) measures by March 2017 and release pilot data for a dozen countries by end 2017. The time-scale for full roll-out across the rest of the world will depend on the level of buy-in from partners and post-pilot funding. We aim for HRMI metrics to become the global go-to measures of human rights by the end of the decade, with the significant benefits outlined above becoming evident as a number of years of data become available.



**Culture:** In order to help bring about positive changes in the world, HRMI aims to embody the change we wish to see. This means that we are committed to operating in a way that is consistent with the values of transparency, participation, collaboration and innovation. We will explore innovative new ways of collecting 'data' and engaging with communities around the world.

## HOW WILL HRMI METRICS BE USED?

By helping to make human rights abuses – and good practices – more transparent, HRMI will provide a tool for use by many different constituencies, including:

- Private sector – help direct capital flows ethically.
- Media – more intelligent news coverage of human rights conditions and policies.
- Public – strongly engaged in monitoring outcomes and advocating for improved policies.
- NGOs and government organisations – improve advocacy effectiveness, and design and implement more effective domestic and international programs to promote human rights.
- Research – add to our understanding of what matters most and how to bring about change

## PILOT PHASE MILESTONES AND NEXT STEPS

**Milestone #1: Co-design workshop** for new CPR measures – February 2017. Key goals:

- To prototype and test our methodology for producing new measures of civil and political rights for a pilot set of countries.
- To build strong engagement with participating NGO researchers, so that these researchers fully contribute to the design process, and liaise back with their organisations.
- To seek feedback on prototype metrics from a range of interested parties, including an academic technical review panel, the business sector, and NGO senior leadership.

**Milestone #2: HRMI website goes live**, including data visualisation tools for ESCR metrics – mid-2017.

**Milestone #3: New pilot CPR measures released** for 12 countries - end-2017. Roll-out to additional countries would then commence.

## WHAT ARE THE KEY CHALLENGES WE FACE?

The challenge ahead is to create an organisation that has the capacity and competencies to support the collection and development of quality and consistent data in more than 150 countries across the world. This will require an infrastructure of field workers, NGO liaison, expert analysts and secure but accessible IT systems. Key risks are: lack of buy-in from NGO partners; insufficient funding; or methodological challenges (we will learn a lot more about this last risk during our co-design workshop in February).

Of these, the two immediate challenges we face are NGO engagement and funding.

**NGO engagement:** While the human rights NGOs we have approached have agreed to allow their researchers to participate in our process, they have also expressed concerns around researcher capacity and their incomplete coverage of human rights issues. These concerns are understandable. Our goal is to minimise the time that NGO researchers will need to spend engaging with us, while also ensuring that they feel it is time well spent. In addition, by moving forward slowly and including key individuals in the co-design process we aim to ensure that the 'data' researchers provide will not be mis-used and design a tool that will be of maximum usefulness for NGOs own research and advocacy. We will also build an on-line forum for researcher discussion (e.g. using Loomio) to facilitate the inclusion of NGO researchers in key decisions regarding the design and dissemination of HRMI metrics.





**Funding:** HRMI has been able to operate to date due to the generous support of several individuals and organisations who have provided more than USD \$250k worth of pro bono professional services and in-kind support (this includes [Motu](#), [UConn Human Rights Institute](#), [CoCreative](#), [DLA Piper](#), [Thinkplace Foundation](#), the [Economic and Social Rights Empowerment Initiative](#), and others). We have also received USD \$10k in unsolicited cash donations.

Looking ahead, the costs of this initiative are made manageable by leveraging off the existing networks of human rights researchers and academics who are already employed by other institutions such as NGOs and Universities. USD \$750k is sought to complete the pilot phase and ensure sufficient engagement and promotion to build the HRMI brand. This budget is based on paying close to market rates for all major expenses, including salaries. However, many expenses will continue to be met through pro bono arrangements. Key expenses that will require cash grants include travel expenses and salaries of staff. The budget is available on request.

Since Motu is a registered charity, grants and donations will have tax favoured status in most jurisdictions.

Ongoing maintenance costs are estimated at USD \$1.5 - \$2.5m per annum, including a communication strategy and allowance for significant capacity-building within NGOs and other data users. One key attribute of HRMI metrics is that in addition to their ultimate value for global citizens, they will also be of direct value to our supporters. By working together to ensure that our metrics and associated services continue to meet the needs of each of our partners/supporters, we will also help to ensure the long-term sustainability of HRMI funding.

The following table summarises the way in which each group of partners can gain a return from their investment in HRMI.

Partners	Form of support	Return on Investment
Civil Society Organisations	Researcher participation in survey plus participation in co-design of new measures	Empowerment, more effective advocacy & targeting of limited resources
Academic community	Provide methodological expertise and use data in research	Publications. Boost global understanding about HR challenges and solutions
Philanthropic sector	\$ support	Boost effectiveness of sector-wide funding
Business sector	Professional services and/or donations	Better able to manage risk and direct capital flows ethically. Plus reputational benefits and employee development.

## INVITATION TO ENGAGE

We welcome discussion as to how you or your organisation might engage with this project. We can be available to meet with you in person in London in early December 2016 or in DC/New York in February 2017. Please contact us

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