Collaboration Between Temporary Relocation Initiatives: Potentials, Challenges and Next Steps
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Collaboration Between Temporary Relocation Initiatives

Potentials, Challenges and Next Steps

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ifa

GOETHE INSTITUT

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Content

Foreword by ifa´s Research Programme "Culture and Foreign Policy"

"Human rights defenders do not heroically stand in front of or apart from the rest of us; they are each of us and among us, they are ourselves, our parents, our neighbours, our friends and colleagues." It is with this quote from Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst, on the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, October 2018, that this study here starts with for good reasons. It emphasizes the fact that the protection of civic space is inherently connected to the art of forming the social body itself. Shelter programmes help individuals and their communities.

ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) is committed to peaceful and enriching coexistence between people and cultures worldwide. We promote art and cultural exchange through exhibitions, dialogue and conference programmes. As a competence centre for international cultural relations, ifa connects civil societies, cultural practices, art, media and science.

This study here from the Martin Roth-Initiative forms part of research at ifa and the ifa Edition Culture and Foreign Policy, in which experts address relevant issues relating to culture and foreign policy with the aim to provide expert advice for policy makers and practitioners. Especially in times of contested civic space it is important to stress the rational, that for the future viability of our societies culture needs to be defended as an area of participation. We are grateful to provide evidence with this publication that this is achieved best through cooperation.

Dr Odila Triebel

Head of Dialogue and Research "Culture and Foreign Policy", ifa

Foreword by Martin Roth-Initiative

Civil society actors at risk – ranging from artists and journalists to activists and human rights defenders – need safe spaces to be able to continue their important work. It is the shared goal of shelter and relocation initiatives worldwide to provide these safe spaces. However, they operate in an international network of diverse regional contexts, security needs and professional communities. As day-to-day practices of how to organise relocation and how to cooperate with other initiatives vary widely, it needs to be continually questioned on which basis cooperation and information-exchange is feasible.

Working for and with at-risk civil society actors requires a particular awareness for their security and the confidentiality of sensitive information. This makes data protection, consent and trust key to the work of relocation initiatives, who are obliged to prevent any negative impact of their actions on individuals and populations (do no harm principle).

Many relocation initiatives are still young. A growing pool of available experiences and best practices enables managers and donors to improve programme design and performance. This publication aims to stimulate discussion about some of the most pressing questions related to collaboration between international relocation initiatives.

This is the third study published within the research programme of the Martin Roth-Initiative (MRI). In 2018, this initiative was started by ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) and the Goethe-Institut to enable temporary relocation and work stays in Germany as well as in other safe countries for at-risk artists. To foster knowledge and contribute examples of good practice for the enhancement of existing programmes, one field of MRI´s activity is dedicated to accompanying research and international networking with other protection programmes. The results are published on a regular basis and aim to stimulate discussion within the global community of practice (see https://www.ifa.de/en/research/research-programme-martin-roth-initiative/).

The first two publications examined worldwide existing relocation programmes from various angles (Jones, Nah and Bartley 2019/Seiden 2019) as well

as their impact on human rights defenders´ home communities with the example of Kenya (Mutahi/Nduta 2020). Upcoming studies will deal with, inter alia, the challenges of safe return after relocation has ended (and alternatives in case return is not an option), with regional shelters for artists in African countries and with artists at risk in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, MRI published a collection of case studies and best practices on wellbeing during temporary international relocation (Bartley 2020).

For their contribution to coordinating and editing this report on collaboration, I would like to thank my colleagues Jana Scheible, Anja Schön, Odila Triebel and Maik Müller. Many thanks also to Emily Pollack for her support in language and content editing.

Dr Lisa Bogerts

MRI Research Coordinator

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore potentials for and challenges of collaboration among temporary international relocation initiatives (TIRIs) for human rights defenders (HRDs) who are at risk. Based on 32 interviews with representatives of 18 relocation programmes worldwide, the author discusses necessary conditions for collaboration and provides TIRI coordinators and managers with recommendations for next steps towards an improved cooperation with other initiatives. She introduces the model of the "relocation cycle" to represent the different phases which make up the application and relocation process. These phases range from the identification and selection of applicants to follow-up after HRDs have returned home or relocate a second time. The study especially focuses on case referrals as a common but often underformalised form of collaboration between TIRIs. To systematise referrals of HRDs from one relocation programme to another, the author distinguishes between three types of referrals according to when they are made: after the identification phase (type A), after the assessment phase (type B) and after the end of the relocation, when the appropriate conditions for safe return of HRDs to their home communities are not in place and another relocation period is presented as an option (type C). The main potentials for collaboration identified in this study are the integration of referrals in TIRIs' mandates, the systematisation of data collection and knowledge management, increased transparency of information exchange, as well as the development of joint advocacy and shared ethical guidelines on data protection and security.

Executive summary

This study aims to identify potentials and challenges of collaboration among Temporary International Relocation Initiatives (TIRIs) – a specific protection mechanism for human rights defenders (HRDs). The need for safe spaces is ever increasing and remains much larger than their current availability. More systematic collaboration between initiatives is urgently necessary and can ensure that at-risk defenders of human rights, democracy and freedom of speech who are in need of temporary relocation will be provided with safe spaces in the best, most effective and most efficient way.

Based on 32 semi-structured interviews with representatives of 18 TIRIs, this study has identified some conditions and next steps towards establishing a more formal or structured collaboration. Case referrals between initiatives and monitoring upon return are two examples in which agreement on a minimum standard could be a first step towards enhanced collaboration. Sharing sensitive information requires some formal agreement or standard operating procedure to make certain that all TIRIs contain the same degree of privacy, confidentiality and responsibility.

The author introduces her model of a relocation cycle that differentiates six phases (or stages) of a relocation process for HRDs: (1) identification and screening of potential relocation participants for the programme (pre-selection), (2) assessment and selection, (3) preparation and start of the actual relocation, (4) relocation stay, (5) return home (or other change of location) at the end of the relocation term and (6) follow-up after participants have returned to their initial place of activity or moved to another location. In three of these phases, defenders might be referred from one TIRI to another one (case referrals). The reasons for referrals to take place can vary. For example, there exists the case that the defender cannot return after the relocation period has ended. TIRIs could exchange the plan around the HRD´s return – made with the defender in the originally hosting TIRI – with the receiving TIRI, which would make the second assessment easier and more rapid based on the fact that existing information could be used for it. The defender would also benefit from simplified procedures and may be able to continue the activities they are involved in.

In the actual day-to-day work of TIRIs, the very ad-hoc and unsystematic manner in which information is exchanged causes some challenges, for which this study identifies various reasons. All respondents representing the 18 TIRIs confirmed they both receive referrals and request referrals themselves, many on a regular basis. None of the TIRIs has a formalised way of dealing with referrals, and as it is not in the mandate of the relocation initiatives, many feel the responsibility to make referrals but do it in an ad-hoc, case-to-case manner, in their own personal time.

The identification of defenders, often made through a selection process, is fundamental to the next stages of the relocation cycle. It is this process in which conditions could be set up that are conducive to collaboration between these initiatives. In the interviews, trust was found to be the primary prerequisite for better collaboration, while lack thereof is a reason not to exchange information that was frequently revealed. One of the conditions for collaborating in a more cohesive way is the demystification of information-sharing and transparency regarding the methods used to select a defender. Practising transparency and openness by TIRIs may include establishing a clear set of guidelines of shared values (such as ethics in application forms). Due to the sensitivity of some information, face-to-face meetings will always play an important role in the work of TIRIs.

One best practice for information-sharing between organisations is the Journalists in Distress Network (JiD): Though information is evidently sensitive and should thus be treated with care, JiD´s 18 member organisations manage to exchange information on a regular basis, enabling them to respond quickly to new situations. The complementarity of the organisations is clear and duplication of tasks is minimised.

The planning of returns was found to be most effective when it is made before relocation even takes place. Not only is this true from the perspective of programme managers, but it also allows defenders to make more informed choices. When a clear discussion takes place in advance concerning what may happen in case the defender cannot return on the planned and agreed date, the individual can make more informed choices about the types of relocation and the location they move to. In the interviews, the importance of expectation management was

mentioned many times. Therefore, this research reiterates that TIRI managers need to be clear from the start about what TIRIs can and cannot offer.

One important conclusion to draw is that there is very little quantitative data available regarding how many applicants have been referred, how many could not return after the agreed date, and how many defenders could return after a second relocation. Individual initiatives may have such data, but it is seldom shared amongst the TIRIs. Yet the collection and sharing of this data is indeed relevant for improving collaboration. The interviewees were clear that access to these data would allow TIRIs to be better prepared and to anticipate referrals by, for example, dedicating a certain amount of time in their mandate to address them. TIRIs could thus better respond to challenges and be more effective. They need to be more transparent internally as well as in their communication with the defenders. When there is an honest and open exchange about vulnerabilities and best practices, about working methods and ethics, a clearer mandate on how TIRIs can better collaborate will become more likely. The professionalisation of TIRIs is needed to be able to take the next steps towards hosting more defenders, doing so in ways that are better matched to defenders' needs and being more accommodating and inclusive of new initiatives that exist or are to be established.

1   Introduction

> "Human rights defenders do not heroically stand in front of or apart from the rest of us; they are each of us and among us, they are ourselves, our parents, our neighbours, our friends and colleagues."[1]

This study aims to contribute to the establishment of a modus operandi in which temporary international relocation initiatives (TIRIs) can cooperate to better protect and serve the needs of civil society actors at risk, both now and in future.

A key framing concept drawn from the research and which informs this paper is that international solidarity is the fundamental value central to TIRIs (Jones et al. 2019: 9). It emphasises that human rights violations and at-risk human rights defenders matter regardless of where they are in the world. In the community of practice around international relocation, there is a commonly felt need to express international solidarity with defenders whose rights have been violated. Temporary relocation provides a break from fear and stress for defenders at risk and simultaneously provides host communities with awareness about human rights; as they gain knowledge and experience from diverse contexts. This win-win situation is a practical consideration that was expressed as important by many of the initiatives interviewed for this study, particularly by those where defenders are hosted by cities. An interview respondent who represented a municipality shared the following:

> "In 2014 this initiative seemed impossible to realise. There were many questions in the city council [after the proposal to become a Shelter City was unanimously proposed and adopted], like, where do we get the money from, and it is also a lot of extra work for one person. This mentality has changed. We cannot and we don't want to be a city without this initiative. We have received so many interesting professionals over the years and we have learned so much."

Solidarity should neither be used to gloss over the difficulties and pitfalls of TIRIs, nor should it oversimplify the diversity of means and methods employed

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[1] Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst, on the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, October 2018; available at:
https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23755 [21 Aug 2020].

in their implementation. However, it should be respected as an integral guiding principle that reminds all involved persons of the reciprocal, mutual nature of the endeavour. With this in mind, this paper aims to shed further light on how TIRIs can operate more efficiently and overcome some of the hurdles that appear to prevent more effective collaboration.

It is important to note that, in this study, the terms "defenders" or human rights defenders (HRDs) encompass all groups relevant to TIRIs, including artists, scholars, journalists and other civil society actors. In this report, when a TIRI focuses on a particular professional group, such as artists or journalists, it will be specified.

In the remaining sections of Chapter 1, the background and objective of this study are described and the methodology and terminology explained. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework by introducing the model of the relocation cycle and its six stages of a relocation process. Chapter 3 looks at the selection process in more detail, discussing the selection criteria and variables influencing the work of TIRIs in this process. Chapter 4 focuses on case referrals in the context of selection, i.e. in case an applicant turns out to be ineligible during the identification phase (hereafter called type A referrals) and in case an applicant has not been selected following assessment (hereafter called type B referral). Chapter 5 discusses the findings on monitoring conditions for defenders´ return to their home communities and collaboration in the context of return. Specific attention is given to referrals in case return is not possible (hereafter called type C referrals). Chapter 6 will close with recommendations for TIRIs on how to improve their collaboration.

1.1   Background and rationale

With the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in 1998, the importance and legitimacy of the work of HRDs was finally recognised (Wille 2019). With this, also came the recognition of their need for better protection. On the 20th anniversary of the Declaration, UN Special Rapporteur Michel Forst expressed his concern for HRDs: despite states' obligation to protect their HRDs and the resources available to promote and protect HRDs, the situation continues to deteriorate all over the world (United Nations 2018).

Forst furthermore expressed that this anniversary was an opportunity to clarify a vision for the human rights movement for the years to come.[2]

TIRIs are one of the protection mechanisms for which the needs are immense and are only expected to grow. In a mapping study requested by the European Commission in 2012, it was estimated that fewer than 200 applicants were relocated on a yearly basis to the entire European Union (EU), comprising 27 countries (GHK Consulting 2012). Since the 2012 mapping, many new initiatives have started in different parts of the world. From the 18 relocation programmes considered in this study, 12 have started after 2012; of those 12, eight started in 2017 and 2018. The extension of programmes has been progressing over the years, bringing opportunities and challenges that will be discussed in this study as well. Though each initiative is unique in its selection process and in its offer of activities to at-risk civil society actors, collaboration has taken on even more importance as a means to prevent duplication of efforts and to increase the geographical scope of TIRI networks.

1.2   Gaps in research

A previous study on TIRIs conducted on behalf of the Martin Roth-Initiative (MRI) (Jones et al. 2019) found that there is hardly any literature available on the phenomenon of TIRIs for at-risk defenders. Sanna Eriksson indicates that there is a "shortage of in-depth structured guidance on good practice lessons" (Eriksson 2018: 484) among TIRIs. Martin Jones notes that there is little attention paid to the intersection of the protection of HDRs and other regimes of protection, including the international refugee regime (Jones 2015: 938). It is no surprise that the community of practice has been enthusiastic about this recent study and the discussions it sparked. There was a clear impetus for follow-up studies to advance some of the recommendations and conclusions.

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[2] https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23755 [21 Aug 2020]. The Declaration on HRDs is not only addressed to states but to all individuals. While it is not legally binding, the Declaration does refer to principles and rights that are defined in other international instruments that are legally binding, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

1.3   Research objectives

This short study aims to fill some of the gaps outlined in the literature on the effectiveness and impact of TIRIs mentioned above. More precisely, the objective of this study is to collect and share best practices regarding case referrals and to discern opportunities and conditions conducive to more effective collaboration. However, during the research process it became clear that the significant topics and challenges to be discussed are too numerous for a single publication. Therefore, this study focuses on case referrals, their challenges and best practices, as well as on potential next steps towards their formalisation.

The following questions inform this study:
1.) Under what conditions is cooperation between existing shelter and relocation programmes possible?
2.) Which referral systems are in place to refer applicants to other programmes? What are best practices and challenges to this process?

1.4   Research methods

In the research process, the main methodology of data collection was structured and semi-structured in-depth interviews with 32 coordinators, managers and administrators working in 18 different TIRIs based on five continents. The aim was to cover a variety of programmes with regard to their target group, size of the programme or network, number of relocated defenders and geographic coverage (see Annex 1, p. 62). Additionally, discussions at two workshops helped to crystallise the findings from the interviews and from secondary literature, and thus contributed to the results laid out in this study: the Shelter City Workshop "Towards a greater security for human rights defenders" (7-9 October 2019 in The Hague, the Netherlands) was attended by 52 representatives of the Shelter City Network and affiliates; the workshop in Berlin (7 November 2019 in Berlin, Germany) was organised by MRI and included a session on collaboration for case referrals, which proved particularly useful for this study.

1.5   Dividing line: artists and human rights defenders

In 1998, the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, or, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, defined a human rights defender without ever mentioning the term. The term *human rights defender* has only been used more commonly following the adoption of the Declaration and since the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) assigned a mandate for a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders in 2000 (ISHR 2013).

The UN defines a human rights defender as "any person who individually or with others acts to promote or to protect human rights."[3] This broad definition encompasses professional as well as non-professional human rights activists, artists, volunteers, journalists, lawyers and any other individuals carrying out human rights activities even on an occasional basis (ISHR 2013).

However, many TIRIs serve one specific type of HRDs and therefore have individual support networks and obtain funding from specific donors. As the study of Jones et al. noted on TIRIs' specific target groups: "One particular way in which the community of practice defines itself is whether the participants in relocation are 'human rights defenders at risk' or 'artists at risk'" (Jones at al. 2019: 14). For example, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) supports journalists, and the Artist at Risk Connection (ARC) supports artists. Programmes that include both of the aforementioned types of participants like ProtectDefenders also exist. The EU mapping study concluded its mapping of TIRIs with the following recommendation:

> "Across the EU and at the global level, there are far more shelter programmes for writers-at-risk, journalists and scholars, compared with shelters for other categories of HRDs such as women HRDs, artists and activists in general. This is an inherent weakness and shelter programmes targeting all categories of HRDs would add value." (GHK 2012: 30)

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[3] https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SRHRDefenders/Pages/Defender.aspx [10 July 2020].

As Jones et al. further note, this division is not felt so much by the artists and HRDs themselves (Jones at al. 2019: 14). In the end, they all identify themselves as defenders. Although since 2012, many new programmes have been established, the reality of the division remains, along with its contesting and overlapping interpretations. In terms of collaboration, more synergy could take place between the different professional communities involved in relocation programmes, e.g., between the human rights sector and the artistic sector, or the human rights community and the journalistic community. Although some initiatives relocate human rights defenders in general, and others focus on particular professionals, they could learn from each other to address the needs of all threatened civil society actors.[4]

2   Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the different stages (or phases) of relocation are introduced using the model of a relocation cycle, followed by a description of three types of referrals as an inherent part of the cycle. This distinction of types is relevant as there are many challenges with regard to referring defenders to different programmes. This model is an attempt to contribute to structuring defender referrals and to the identification of conditions that need to be in place for this to occur.

2.1   Introducing the model of the relocation cycle

The relocation cycle involves six stages that all participants of relocation initiatives pass through, though their sequence and activities vary. The image of a cycle was chosen to highlight the potential continuation of a relocation process when a participant starts another relocation with another programme. Furthermore, the different stages of the temporary relocation all hold opportunities to enhance collaboration between TIRIs. During this study, when cross-checking the model (see Figure 1 below) with interview respondents, they described the challenges with regard to referrals in different phases of the relocation process.

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[4] It is important to note that several interview respondents mentioned that HRDs do not feel comfortable with wordings like "shelter" or "at risk" since it may draw unnecessary attention to colleagues who stay behind. For instance, it was mentioned that in Asia names like "Shelter City" were unacceptable.

Therefore, the types of referrals are here distinguished according to the stage after which they take place: after the identification stage, after the assessment stage and after the relocation stay itself. The three types of referrals will be explained in section 2.2., which will also feature a discussion regarding the necessity of different approaches to systematisation and collaboration depending on the referral type.
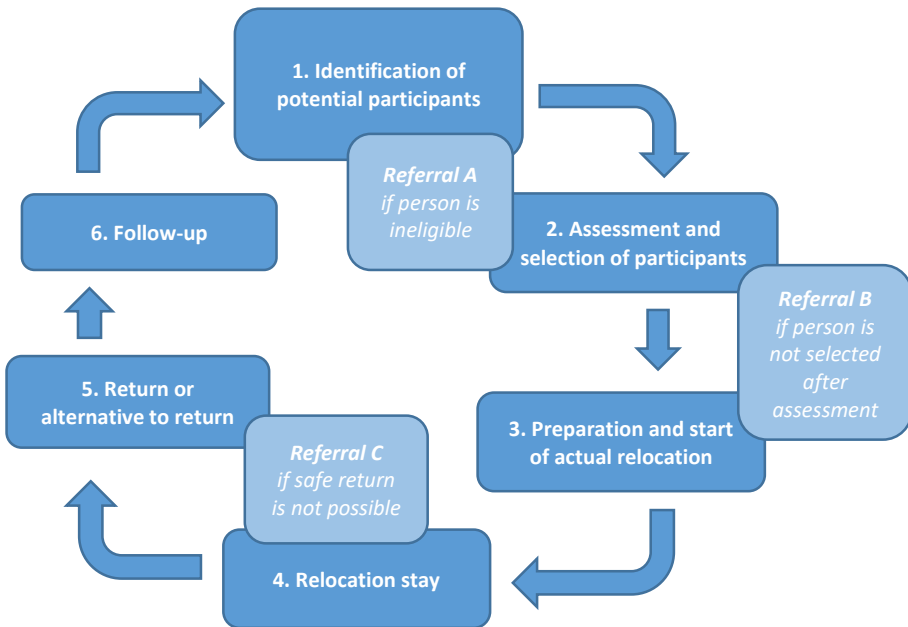
Figure 1: Relocation cycle (developed by the author)

The first two stages correspond to the steps taken by the host programme to establish whether a person is suitable to be relocated within this specific programme. This includes determining whether the locations covered by the programme are suitable for the defender at this particular time, and whether such a relocation is practically possible. Selection procedures are put in place to determine candidates who will benefit most from the programme. The relocation process could stop here in case the applicant turns out to be ineligible according to the general criteria of the programme considered in the identification phase

(stage 1) or if the specific circumstances of the case turn out to prevent the possibility of relocation during the assessment (stage 2). If the programme and the participant agree on the terms of the relocation, the actual relocation can be planned and started: stage 3 and 4 correspond to logistics and programme activities offered to HRDs before and during their relocation stay. Stage 5 makes preparations for a safe return, if possible[5]; and stage 6 aims to lead to an agreement between the defender and the host programme to follow-up once the participant has returned home or has left for another location.

1.   Identification of potential participants for temporary relocation

- Gathering information about HRDs' context, identifying the needs of HRDs and of their environment.
- Ascertaining whether case falls under mandate of specific TIRI.
- Initiation of risk assessment and analysis of the HRDs´ security situation.[6]
- Fundraising on a case-to case basis.
- Referral A in case the person is ineligible according to the formal criteria of this specific TIRI.

2.   Assessment and selection of participants for the programme

- Verification of the applicant´s details and the local organisation that supports their application from the place of residence and/or origin.
- Risk assessment: programme assesses the applicant´s risk/security situation and cross-checks with other partners in its network, and in some cases with other organisations within the TIRI community.
- Visa check: is it possible to get a visa for this potential participant?
- Referral B in case the person seems better suited for another programme (e.g. one which covers other locations for relocation).

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[5] For a detailed discussion of the challenges related to HRDs' "safe return" to their home communities and alternatives in case return is not an option, see Stanley Seiden´s study conducted on behalf of the Martin Roth-Initiative (Seiden 2020, forthcoming).
[6] For case referrals and relocation procedures in cases of emergency, see Chapter 4.2.

3.   **Preparation and start of the actual relocation**

- Logistics: accommodation, tickets for transport, visa procedure, workplace, introduction week, etc.
- Making sure the defender and any accompanying family have access to all kinds of services, e.g. schooling, health or wellbeing support.
- Planning the relocation stay (and possibility of safe return following the relocation).

4.   **Adaptation of programme during relocation stay to needs of the participant**

- Access to healthcare (basic healthcare or extensive check-ups).
- Psychosocial wellbeing: access to counselling, psychologists, etc.[7]
- Capacity building: specification of all training/workshops on offer by different organisations, including digital/data security training.
- Education: language, university courses, online courses, etc.
- Provision of office/workspace and necessary equipment (e.g. for telecommunication).
- Facilitation of access to local social networks, contact with local non-governmental organisations and participation in their activities.
- Organisation of events as safe spaces for HRDs/artists to exchange amongst each other (e.g. for peer exchange between those with similar professions).
- Access to people, organisations, businesses and politicians (local and national) who could add value to HRDs' networks.

5.   **End of the relocation and HRD´s return to initial working place (or alternatives to return)**

- Preparation for safe return.
- Referral C in case return is not possible.

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[7] For principles for the wellbeing of HRDs during international relocation, see "The Barcelona Guidelines on Wellbeing and Temporary International Relocation of Human Rights Defenders at Risk" (2019). For a collection of case studies and best practices for the implementation of the Barcelona Guidelines, see Patricia Bartley's recent publication edited by Martin Roth-Initiative (Bartley 2020).

6. **Follow-up with participants after relocation has ended**

    ▪ Monitoring of safe return through regular contact with former
      participants.
    ▪ Regular contact between alumni.

2.2   Three types of case referrals

Case referrals may occur if at-risk defenders need temporary relocation but are
not selected for a programme or in the event that they cannot return home after
the relocation stay provided by a certain programme has ended. Defenders can
apply directly to various programmes, or they can be recommended by a pro-
gramme or partner organisation. Embassies, on occasion, also get in touch with
relocation programmes requesting if there is space for a person at high risk.
Three types of referrals will be differentiated here[8], as also shown in Figure 1:

▪ *Type A:* Defenders who have applied to a certain relocation pro-
  gramme and do not fit the formal criteria of the relocation programme
  (may occur after stage 1: identification of the applicant)[9];
▪ *Type B:* Defenders who, during the assessment process, prove to be in-
  eligible (may occur after stage 2: assessment);
▪ *Type C:* Defenders who cannot return home after the programme has
  ended (may occur after stage 4: relocation stay).

Type A referrals may be an option for applicants who do not fulfil the formal
criteria of the programme they apply for. One example for a formal requirement
is the knowledge of a certain language; another one is that the applicant may
need to be affiliated with an established organisation, which varies from initia-

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[8] During the workshop in Berlin on 7 November 2019, a small group reflected on the various issues
with regard to referrals. The group was also asked to comment on the types of referrals indicated
by the researcher, which were then slightly adapted.

[9] Two out of the 18 programmes publish calls for applications and accept participants who then
start their relocation stay together in cohorts. Many programmes accept applications throughout
the year, which makes them more flexible in terms of the timeline for relocation. All programmes
have application forms, often for reasons of accountability towards the donor. Others work on
referrals only, such as recommendations from another organisation known by the programme.

tive to initiative. An individual's eligibility is usually assessed during initial con-
tact or when pre-selecting candidates from application forms. Referring a poten-
tial applicant to another potentially more suitable programme in this stage of the
process could be beneficial for the applicant and could save both the defender
and the new potential programme time and effort.

Type B referrals may be an option for applicants identified in the first stage
who fulfil the formal selection criteria but are not selected in the assessment
phase due to incidental reasons when "competing" with other (more eligible)
applicants for a vacancy in the programme. Assessment of applicants is the part
of the relocation process that requires the most time and resources. Reasons for
rejection could be that others are simply a better fit or create a better balance in
the group of applicants in terms of type of defender, country of origin or gender,
for example. It is especially these types of referrals that could save programmes
time and resources when done in a systematic way.

Type C referrals may help participants who cannot return home because the
security situation there has not ameliorated during their stay abroad. Exchang-
ing risk assessments among initiatives at this stage could prevent the applicant
from needing to go through the entire assessment process again with another
programme in the case of a second relocation. This can expedite the second ap-
plication process and save the applicant as well as the initiative much effort.

The relevance of referrals varies greatly between different programmes.
Some programmes base their participant selection exclusively on referrals. One
reason for this can be that the programme is small and cannot accommodate
more than a few applicants per year. Other programmes rely exclusively on re-
ferrals because they work in unstable regions and do not publicise the pro-
gramme's activities by publishing calls for applications or publicly providing ap-
plication forms.

3 Understanding TIRIs´ selection processes

Following the overview of the entire relocation cycle in Chapter 2, this chapter will designate special attention to the selection process, i.e. the first two stages of the relocation cycle (identification and assessment of the applicants). It is especially important to focus on these stages of the process in more detail because it is usually here that at least a minimum amount of information about the applicant is collected. Which information is gathered and how is key for improving collaboration among TIRIs in the context of all three types of referrals discussed in this study. The selection process is as diverse as the variety in initiatives. Sharing data during the selection process has the potential for collaboration that could create a win-win situation for the applicant, the programme referring the applicant, as well as for the programme receiving the applicant.

3.1 Identification of applicants

The means by which programmes identify and contact the potential participants vary between programmes. Two relocation programmes included in this study issue calls for applications at specific times of the year; namely, the Protective Fellowship Programme at the Centre of Applied Human Rights (CAHR) at the University of York and the Shelter City Network.[10] The other 16 programmes that were interviewed accept applications throughout the year. Most TIRIs utilise application forms as the basis for their selection process, while some programmes (mainly small ones) only work on referrals, which function as verification of the applicant. Therefore, if the applicant is referred by an organisation known by the second programme, the trust between the programmes is usually sufficient to accept the application, assuming the applicant fits to the programme and there is sufficient funding and vacancies available.

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[10] Shelter City has two calls of applications a year for the 12 participating cities within the Netherlands. The Shelter Cities outside The Netherlands (Tbilisi, Dar es Salam, San José and Porto Novo (Benin)) accept applications throughout the year. The Protective Fellowship Scheme of CAHR also has calls for applications once a year (February to April for starting the following academic year in September).

3.2   Selection criteria

Selection criteria vary from programme to programme, but the minimal criteria are that 1) the person should be an HRD in the broader sense, i.e. an artist, writer, scholar, journalist, or any other kind of civil society activist, and 2) the person's work puts them at risk. All 18 programmes, including those which accept candidates via referrals only, check these two criteria at the very least.[11] Further criteria were mentioned by the interviewed programme representatives, such as persecution, affiliation with an organisation and writing skills (for journalists and authors), depending on the specific programme.

HRD identity verification

To confirm the identity of the applicant and assess whether the defender is known as an HRD in their profession (e.g., journalist, lawyer, artist), TIRIs check the internet, their networks, their partner organisations and affiliates in the applicant's sphere of work.

The TIRI that accepts the applicant is responsible for ensuring that identity verification is performed with transparency and diligence. In practice, verification of applicants is completed, to a large extent, by programmes who have a presence in the HRDs' countries of origin and/or places of work. Various regional TIRIs are regularly requested to verify applicants. Though programmes are generally willing to help, there are also concerns. Requests for verifications are always made under urgency and programmes do not always have the capacity for immediate follow-up.

Checking if the applicant is "at risk"

Relocation programmes employ different definitions of "at risk". Jones et al. assess how risk is defined and outline several perspectives that are applied by different programmes as a measure of risk in applicant selection (Jones et al. 2019: 25). Interview respondents in their study prioritised urgency (chronic versus emergency), type of risk (physical versus psychological) and level of risk (high versus low). The delineations of what high or low risk entails were not specified.

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[11] This includes programmes which do not have a standardised application, assessment or vetting process.

One respondent explained that their target group comprises those who need a respite from being in a situation in which they are at risk – not those who receive death threats. Some initiatives let the defenders assess the risk they face themselves. A respondent from Forum Asia explained:

> "Risk assessments will be done by the defenders themselves and by the organisation in their country. There was a case where one defender said they need to really leave the country, but then we checked with the member or the endorsement organisation, then they said, 'It is not that high risk'. In such a case we ask them to talk to each other and then together make a final decision."

One criterion set by the International City of Refuge Network (ICORN) is that the defender (i.e. the writer or artist) is being persecuted. PEN International UK[12] is the organisation responsible for the assessments for ICORN. A respondent from PEN explained that acquiring proof of persecution can be challenging: "To get an arrest warrant or to receive evidence from the court, this is far from widely available."

Affiliation with an organisation

In many cases, affiliation with an organisation is also a requirement. In addition, affiliation could function as an extra safety net for the defender upon return. As Eriksson states:

> "The requirement of affiliation comes firstly from the need to ensure continued commitment to human rights work, as experience shows that HRDs without organisational backing are more likely to discontinue their work after the end of the fellowship." (Eriksson 2018: 487)

Writing skills (for HRDs who are writers/journalists)

One respondent explained that writing skills are a prerequisite for defenders who are to be hosted by a programme for journalists or other writers, as writing must be part of their professional work: "The only way to express themselves is through writing. None of the journalists that are killed are BBC style journalists. They died because they wrote and because they criticised regimes, so it does go beyond the strict definition of a journalist."

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[12] The acronym PEN stands for "Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, and Novelists".

3.3   Variables influencing the selection process

The community of practice of TIRIs is diverse and, as a result, it is difficult to determine one selection model that applies to all. However, the study by Jones et al. (2019) identifies three different overarching variables that determine the structure and objectives of relocation: 1) the nature of the host programme, 2) the role of relocation within the host programme, and 3) the type of individual who is supported in relocation. Other variables influencing the practice of temporary relocation are the length of relocation, geographies of relocation, the broader goals of relocation, and the size of the programme (Jones et al. 2019: 12-16). These variables are important because as much as they affect the practice of temporary relocation, they likewise affect the selection process, the design and content of application forms, and how applicants are assessed.

The variables mentioned in the interviews of this study with respect to the selection process partly overlap with the findings of Jones et al. (2019), while others are new variables identified in the research undertaken for this publication. In the following sections, eight variables will be discussed in more detail: length of the relocation, language, characteristics of defenders, level of risk, funding and vacancies, visa possibilities, gender and other considerations related to the diversity of relocated defenders, and security of relocation.

There are several practical considerations that determine whether a defender can be hosted or not. While some of these overlap with selection criteria, it is crucial to acknowledge that those practical considerations say little about the profession or the qualification of the defender, and more about the capacities of the host location and community.

Length of the relocation
Relocation can be for as short as six weeks (rest and respite) or as long as two years (temporary residence). Most relocation programmes host participants between three and six months. The length of the programme has an influence on the selection procedure. Initiatives are usually inflexible regarding the extension of this period for reasons of funding and visa terms.

Language

Irrespective of the urgency of relocation and the nature of the defenders' work, there are practical considerations to take into account. Language was found to be a primary example of one such consideration, as every programme has language as a requirement, though some initiatives are more flexible than others. If the person does not speak the working language of the programme at a basic level, they cannot benefit from the programme as such. One respondent from a municipality which hosts two guests a year explained, "We only receive guests who speak English. The content [i.e. the human rights topic the HRD is working on or is specialised in] is never a problem but if we would need to hire a translator for every meeting, it would be unaffordable."

Eriksson (2018) also notes exclusion of HRDs on the basis of their language skills. This group usually comprises defenders from non-Anglophone countries or rural and indigenous defenders from lower educational backgrounds. This does not only account for the Fellowship Programme in York, which Eriksson refers to, but for the majority of programmes, according to the findings of this study on collaboration between TIRIs.

Target group: characteristics of defenders

Characteristics of HRDs impact the programme and support available during relocation. Various initiatives focus on specific characteristics of human rights defenders so as to find applicants who are the best fit for their programme. The driving principle is that the HRD-programme relationship should be a mutually beneficial one. The defender should get the best temporary relocation as possible to thrive with new networks and skills upon return, and the hosting programme should benefit from the expertise and experiences of the defender, as should the hosting community, if possible. One respondent who assessed applications for many years outlined some of the considerations:

> "Sometimes you might want to take up a case of someone who is not under acute threat... but because of their high profile it benefits the sum of the whole to occasionally have such people, particularly in a new city. We want to

> give them [cities that are new in the programme] a case which would encour-
> age them to take up more cases rather than to find themselves with someone
> who needs a lot of support… who is not able to communicate too gracefully, or
> outside, a bit shy with performing… because many of these programmes also
> require public […] engagement with the city… which is understandable.
> Because you have to show value for money."

In the following section, HRDs are differentiated according to three characteristics:

(1) The defender who fits the needs of the relocation city and vice versa

None of the interviewed programmes stated public engagement as a require-
ment for placement. At the 2019 Shelter City workshop in The Hague, one mu-
nicipality representative shared that their city has had three defenders in a row
that explicitly did not want any public attention or any information publicised
on the Shelter City website. The city agreed with this and did not express any
regrets but did request for the next defender to be able to organise public
events or activities in order to exchange with the local communities in the city.

On the other hand, the city of relocation should be suited to fit the needs of
the defender as well. Managing expectations is one part of confirming this.
One respondent illustrated this point by saying that in an informal meeting
they would honestly discuss the following:

> "Is this really what you want? This is a small place, quite far from everything, it is
> wet and cold. We do an effort to get clear in how the defender perceives rest,
> reflection and recharge. What are the plans? And then see if this is a match."

(2) The defender who is global (as opposed to local)

Well-connected HRDs with an international network have more opportuni-
ties to apply to a TIRI for a number of reasons: various members of their net-
work will inform the person about this opportunity; the HRD has probably
been involved in other international events and knows how to deal with ap-
plication forms, or knows where to get support; and HRDs will usually have
access to referees. For defenders who have only local networks and experi-
ences, the application is more difficult. If they have become acquainted with
the programme, the application form is often the first hurdle they need to

overcome: access is more complicated for these defenders, as they often oper-
ate individually. They typically are not affiliated with an established organi-
sation and they have a limited international network. The challenge of this
type of defender is threefold: they are less aware of the opportunity at hand
and less familiar with application forms, which complicates their admission
to a TIRI. As Eriksson notes, "This is a serious issue in terms of access, but a
common one in relocation programmes, where it is usually HRDs already
well connected who know how to help themselves and find further support
through relocation and other means" (Eriksson 2018: 487). An interviewed se-
lection committee member further noted:

> "We also take a close look at the application forms. Sometimes it looks very slick
> but in reality this person didn't fill in the form but received support from some-
> one. The opposite also happens. Sometimes the application form doesn't look
> good, but it appears to be a human rights defender with a lot of knowledge for
> whom this could just be a boost to continue their work. Sometimes we need
> more referees."

A member of another selection committee shared one of the dilemmas the pro-
gramme faces:

> "If a defender is good, the impact will be bigger, but there will also be a higher
> probability that the person will go their own way during relocation… This pro-
> gramme is also about the human aspect, and we certainly do not want to ex-
> clude the 'loners' who operate on a small scale."

A programme director explained, "We are trying to focus not necessarily on
stars, but on people who have slightly less visibility. We believe they are more
at risk. They have a smaller network, and often no organisation that backs
them up."

**(3) The defender who needs a respite (as opposed to continuing the work
during relocation)**
Some defenders suffer from trauma, experience burnout or need to recover
from physical violence. These individuals may simply be in need of a respite
from their chronically stressful situation. The needs, wishes and expectations of

HRDs are diverse. Some programmes are explicit in what they expect from the defender, as one respondent mentioned: "This is not a respite. It is, but it is not declared as such. They should continue their activism. But with less stress."

A respondent from an initiative that hosts defenders both in comprehensive relocation programmes in Europe and shorter rest and respite programmes in different locations in the world said, "There is no strict timeline. The main key word is flexibility. It can change from paying for a holiday in a resort for a couple of weeks to [actually living in] a city."

One respondent noted a challenge for victims of violence for whom relocation cannot be found:

> "For example, survivors of torture, they suffer head, legs, and teeth injuries mainly. They are not human rights defenders or journalists anymore. They suffer from loss of memory and concentration. The facility is not equipped for this, but there is nobody else who provides care."

Level of risk

Although the assessment of the level of risk generally belongs to selection criteria (see Chapter 3.2), it is nevertheless important to note that the level of risk also has an impact on the set-up and structure of initiatives. For example, ICORN hosts writers who have been persecuted. Defenders who apply to ICORN have often been moving around for a long time before they find a temporary residence in one of the cities of refuge. Their relocation is temporary but for up to a period of two years. Their selection procedure is therefore different and as a consequence, ICORN cannot host defenders who need to be relocated very quickly due to immediate risk. Of the 18 TIRIs interviewed, only three programmes (Scholars at Risk, Forum Asia and Frontline Defenders) are set up as emergency programmes.

Funding and vacancies

Evidently, if there are no vacancies in the programme of relocation, HRDs cannot be relocated there. The programme will look at other initiatives for referral, similar to cases in which there exist funding challenges. "We have a budget for a

certain number of defenders, but the reality is that we are always supporting more people," said an interviewee from a regional relocation programme. In the regional initiatives interviewed, funding was often mentioned as one of the hurdles to overcome when accepting a high-risk HRD who needs relocation quickly. The number of HRDs requesting relocation always exceeds the prede-termined budget. It often happens that extra funding is sought from various emergency funds like Protect Defenders, generally on a case-to-case basis. If funding is rejected, the person cannot be relocated within this programme. A re-spondent from Uganda mentioned that a funding shortage has led them to refer at-risk people to other locations.

Visa possibilities
In Europe, individuals require entry visas for their relocation. Tourist visas are, in principle, provided for a maximum of three months. Various coordinators ob-served that visa requirements have increased for certain home countries; visas take longer or are denied with more frequency. For example, Yemen, Iran and Syria were named by respondents as countries in which visas were difficult to receive or were denied on the grounds that defenders from these locations are likely not to be able to return after three months.

For regional initiatives, visa regulations seem to be more lax as defenders either do not require a visa, or regional visa waiver agreements apply. In Nepal, for ex-ample, all visitors with a visa can stay up to 150 days. Shelter City Costa Rica was mentioned as having established a best practice for visa agreements. It has a unique agreement with the Costa Rican Department of Immigration, a special status, which is strictly between the Department and (the protection organisa-tion) Acceso. They can easily apply for a three-month visa for their defenders, and, when needed, they will receive a renewal for an additional three months. While there are no statistics available, the interviewed representative of Acceso said that for the majority of defenders, three months is not sufficient and they are only able to return after six months.

At the EU Temporary Relocation Platform (EUTRP)[13], visas are a recurrent topic for discussion. A paper was drafted presenting alternatives for the standard 90-day visa with the rationale that this flexibility would buy defenders more time to plan their return or plan next steps in case return within 90 days is not possible.

In the session on collaboration in the 2019 Berlin workshop, a discussion was held on the strategic positioning of TIRIs vis-à-vis the EU and other stakeholders. One point that was deliberated was whether the EUTRP members should implement a united approach to the above-mentioned challenges with EU visas, or if a bilateral approach would have a better chance for success. It was feared that if programmes were to collaborate on this issue, or if they were to request more flexible visas not for one country but for the entire EU, these requests would be denied instantly. One respondent did say their programme was discussing the flexibility of visas on a bilateral basis with some stakeholders but could not share any further information at that time, for fear of undermining this highly sensitive process.

Gender balance and other considerations related to the selection of defenders
Gender balance is considered when selecting a cohort of HRDs, as noted by a member of the Shelter City selection committee[14]: "We always look at the composition of the group of defenders. We look at the gender balance as well as geographic balance and balance in the rights they defend." For instance, programmes that cannot host families find it challenging to host women who have children, since women leave the location where their children (and the other parent, if applicable) reside less often than men, mainly due to traditional gender roles in childcare responsibilities and other forms of labour.

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[13] The European Platform hosts annual meetings of its members who are all involved somehow in temporary relocation. The objective of the platform is to facilitate coordination and collaboration amongst the members. The platform is coordinated by the secretariat of Protect Defenders which is a consortium of 12 NGOs for advice and advocacy and is also an important funder for temporary relocation of HRDs, including artists, journalists and lawyers.
[14] Shelter City has 16 cities worldwide and 12 cities in the Netherlands. For those 12 cities in the Netherlands a national selection committee has been put in place.

One selection committee member was quite disappointed to conclude that the defenders who applied in the past two years were not diverse: not a single artist had applied, despite the fact they would have been considered. According to statistics compiled by Shelter City on the type of defenders they hosted between 2012 and 2019, participants defending civil political rights were in the majority. Geographically, selection committees try to provide a broad representation of different regions and countries. In the past two years, there was a sharp increase in applications from the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) and from Asia. Though the needs in some countries are higher, diversity is deemed to be important as participants learn a great deal from different contexts and situations as well as hosting environments.

Security in relocation
Determining whether a defender will be safe during relocation was raised as an issue of concern by various regional relocation programmes. In some cases, the programme decided not to host a defender for security reasons. According to the respondents of this study, possible security concerns were related to the sphere the defender was active in, e.g. LGBTQIA* and queer liberation. In some cases, the intelligence service of the country of origin contributed to the risk defenders and their families experienced.[15] Frontline Defenders has been engaged in providing advice on security and performing risk assessments to some of the new shelters.

3.4   Implications for case referrals and other collaboration between TIRIs

The above discussion of the selection process has demonstrated that selection criteria and other variables have several implications for the prospects of collaboration:

Integrity of TIRI staff
Various interviewees stated that there were no common ethical standards with regard to processing applications in the community of practice, which may raise questions about the integrity and lack of experience of staff. A respondent from

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[15] The Hague Peace Projects recently published the report "Threats to Human Rights Defenders in the Netherlands" (The Hague Peace Projects 2020). This report is an initial exploration of 15 HRDs who have been threatened, intimidated, harassed or harmed by governmental actors from their countries of origin while working and living in the Netherlands.

PEN, an established organisation with many years of experience in assessing applicants, explained that although there is no formal guideline on how to perform assessments, the programme staff needs to follow ethical considerations. For example, one of the stated rules is never to contact any individual or entity to obtain more information outside of the contacts provided by the applicant. This means the assessors would never call a peer for more information for fear they would inadvertently disclose that the person is seeking placement. They would also never let the assessed person know that they were involved in the assessment, even if they meet afterwards. They would also never comment on the quality of the work of an applicant:

> "People once asked me how many on your list are writers, I went: 200. How many are good writers? I went... all? You have to bear in mind that we don't know the local context, translations can be really bad, so I am very reluctant to call anyone a bad writer."

One respondent elaborates how contact with applicants during the assessment process can be stressful for programme staff too, as well as how this contact poses challenges to the assessors in terms of remaining objective and maintaining integrity. She explains that when a staff member has contact with an applicant and this person becomes stranded somewhere, for example, this is emotionally difficult for staff, too. She notes, "[Coping with the situation of the applicant] needs a whole different skill set than the people who are assessing let's say advocacy."

The emotional challenges that might result from being in contact with an applicant at risk is why PEN staff are never in contact with the individuals at all. Another argument for separating the task of assessments from staff who take on other tasks (such as advocacy or administration) is that people in the organisation are often passionate about wanting to support the defender in need and, as a result, may feel uncomfortable applying the different sets of criteria used for applicant selection.

References
Ten of the relocation programmes interviewed confirmed that they request at least two references as part of their application procedure. Examples of references include the defenders' employers or former employers and professionals who can

confirm the work in which the defenders are engaged. Three of the programmes whose representatives were interviewed (Forum Asia, Defenders in Dordrecht and Front Line Defenders) described using their partner networks as references. Forum Asia does not work with referees, but rather with an endorsement system through their network members or, in some exceptional cases, their members' partner organisations as well. When a member of Forum Asia endorses an applicant, they will usually be accepted. The other programmes (out of the ten mentioned above) were not explicit about using referees and this issue was not further discussed during their interviews. One respondent from PEN stated:

> "And I will look into their referees, see who they are. I will sometimes get annoyed with the referees because too often they copy and paste each other, or take a statement made by that person [the applicant]. Even people who I know can get more information than they do. Because they want to be nice, you can kind of see that."

This criticism was commonly shared among respondents. Checking referees takes a lot of time and does not necessarily provide the information required.

On some occasions, it has even brought the referee in a difficult situation when regional initiatives providing verification for other programmes were named to the applicant: "The challenge we have had is that we vet cases and share with partners and assess, and then those programmes reveal that we did the vetting to the applicant: this is hard". The vetting process is a highly confidential process. It is based upon trust among partners to support identification and to triangulate the information that is available. If the applicant is not selected and they learn that it was their partner organisation whose information led to the refusal, both the applicant and the organisation feel mistrustful toward one another, as a regional TIRI reported.[16] Another respondent shared the same concern, citing an example of a rejected applicant who asked the referring initiative what it had communicated, as, in the applicant's opinion, this was the reason for their rejection.

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[16] The aspect of loss of trust was also emphasised as being distressing by a representative of another programme who participated in the Berlin workshop on collaboration on 7 November 2019.

4   Referrals and collaboration in the identification and assessment phases

In this section, the two main types of referrals that occur during the selection process are discussed. In this study, these types are referred to as type A referrals if the applicant is ineligible according to the formal criteria (phase 1: identification), and type B referrals if the applicant has not been selected for other reasons that appear later in the assessment process (phase 2: assessment). After explaining the occurrence of these two kinds of referrals (Chapter 4.1), emergency referrals are discussed (Chapter 4.2), followed by monitoring referrals in the context of selection (Chapter 4.3). This chapter will close with a discussion of potential for collaboration and what is needed to systemise referrals (Chapter 4.4). Reflections on trust, guidelines on data protection or best practices of secure information-sharing will also be part of this section.

4.1   Occurrence of referrals type A and B

Interview respondents as well as all 13 participants at the Berlin workshop on referrals in November 2019 confirmed that their organisations received and submitted all three types of referrals discussed in this study.[17] When asked how coordinators approach referrals, and if there is any consent or agreement between TIRIs, the frequent answer was that there is no particular structure. Referrals are usually organised in an ad-hoc manner and preferably bilaterally. Personal relations or trusted contacts between the managers of the initial and the receiving initiative were found to be conducive for facilitating referrals.

    In reality, TIRIs do process referrals but they are not part of their mandate. Time spent on trying to find alternative locations and programmes that fits HRDs' needs is neither funded nor monitored. One respondent confirmed the dilemma of investing time in referrals:

> "In terms of responsibility, this is really tricky. My employer doesn't think I should be doing this. It is not what is expected from me, but I take a responsibility. Where is that boundary? Sometimes it is… I think do I have the time to invest this extra time and I already interviewed this case and it was very strong."

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[17] While type A and type B referrals are discussed in this section, the third type of referrals that occur within the context of return will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The Artist at Risk Connection (ARC) fills a niche in the operational sphere of TIRIs, as referrals are their core mandate and they have a standard procedure for referring cases. ARC is an organisation that was established in 2017 to bridge the divide between artists in need of assistance and the relocation community who usually focuses on human rights defenders or journalists. They offer legal assistance, support with temporary relocation or they connect artists with key people in larger professional networks. The working methods of this organisation are as follows: artists and writers looking for a safe space can connect with ARC online. To start, they need to fill in an encrypted application form with 35 questions. ARC then checks the identity of the applicant and if the threat the applicant describes is credible. When the needs of the artist have been identified, ARC then checks which relocation initiatives which could be a match. Next, a list is drafted of possible relocation partners and locations, which is shared with the applicant.

ARC also connects applicants directly with suitable initiatives and follows up when there is no response from an initiative to an artist at risk. If the receiving relocation initiative is unaware that the defender´s referral was facilitated by ARC, the initiative may perform the assessment process again from scratch. If the relocation initiative is informed of the referral, the application form is shared with that organisation to help compile any possible missing information, without duplication, in cases where this information-sharing has not occurred already. ARC designates responsibility for the application to the applicants themselves and follows up with them on a regular basis. If there is a problem between an applicant and an organisation, ARC may contact them (with the consent of the applicant). Often both organisations have at that point already invested time and effort in collecting information from the applicant.

The objective of ARC is to gain the trust of organisations and to create safe spaces where more organisations could exchange information at once. A secure communication channel using the communication tool Wire was set up by ARC and 15 staff and board members were trained in how to use it.[18]

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[18] Wire is an end-to-end encrypted communication tool that is hosted by a Swiss server; and thus bound by European Privacy Laws. Wire works similarly to Skype: one person makes a call and can invite people to group calls or chats. The Wire guest room is a private online "room" where all invited members can chat and share information and files. About five organisations use this tool and aspire to widen this small group of users to foster collaboration and information-sharing while at the same time complying with security standards that are required when working with artists at risk.

4.2 Referrals in case of an emergency

In case a defender is at acute risk, six programme representatives shared that the procedure is slightly different from the standard application process. For example, in Tanzania, in case of an emergency, the African Human Rights Network (AHRN), the NGO who hosts defenders at risk[19], will need to respond quicker than in cases with a lower level of threat. In such exceptions, a board and a committee will be informed and the HRD in question will not have to go through the official application process. However, due to donor requirements, an application form is always a prerequisite and is delivered once the HRD has been relocated to a safe place.

However, there is broad consensus that emergencies are the exception and not the rule. The majority of programmes do not have the resources or infrastructure to deal with emergencies swiftly and adequately. One respondent from an Africa-based initiative emphasized they would not want to systematise emergencies as they do not have the capacity to do so. In exceptional cases, when they know the defender, or when the defender is referred to the organisation by a well-known and trusted partner organisation, they can unblock money to quickly support the person in leaving their country of origin. After that point, the best way forward can be determined.

The Shelter City programme in Tbilisi, Georgia, usually receives urgent cases from partners they know well, so they only need to cross-check some of the provided information and can respond quickly. In some cases, the HRD is already in Georgia and staff can meet the applicant quickly. A member of the selection committee emphasised that it is not desirable to have defenders bypass the regular procedures as, in their words, it undermines the systems in place.

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[19] In 2017 the non-governmental organisation AHRN joined the international Shelter City Network. Every Shelter City has its own methods for selection of applicants. Shelter City Dar es Salaam has put in place a committee in charge of the acceptance of applicants into the programme. HRDs at risk are usually referred to the AHRN by people in their network and in some case by the Dutch Embassy.

4.3   Monitoring of selection and referrals

Initiatives collect data on the number of applications received, accepted and rejected. Respondents named privacy and security concerns as the reason for which much of this data is not shared between initiatives. As a result, limited data is available on how many at-risk HRDs are and have been relocated. This information is essential to ascertain whether supply is meeting demand. For example, knowledge of the number of defenders and their geographical sites of work could assist in decision-making around strategising future regional locations of relocation initiatives.

Tracking the number of received referrals can help programmes plan in dedicated time for the coordinator to process referrals. This information can further help organisations set up monitoring systems and maintain better data. The patterns that arise from analysis of the collected data could indicate which referrals are most common and how much time they require.

4.4   Potentials for collaboration and secure information-sharing

When initiatives do not collaborate in the application process, they duplicate the work of other initiatives, as the selection process starts again from scratch. This axiom also applies when programmes accept applicants who have already participated in other relocation initiatives. In particular, applicants with severe trauma or psychosocial issues may suffer from lack of collaboration, leading to a situation in which their own safety and that of the people surrounding them could be jeopardised. Within the context of information-sharing, there exists a tension between keeping the at-risk defender safe and supporting them in their acute and more structural needs.

First, programmes require information regarding which organisation is hosting which defenders and which selection criteria are being implemented. Representatives of different initiatives should have regular contact and exchanges with one another concerning the types of defenders they refer and accept, and thus for whom they have capacity. This practice would be a first step towards systemising referrals.

For type B referrals, the defender would ideally be referred to another TIRI without having to be re-assessed. Reconciling assessment criteria would help streamline HRDs' referrals, and frequent communication about assessments is fundamental to finding consensus on a minimum standard of assessments.

Trust both between TIRIs and HRDs and between the managers of different TIRIs is key to good cooperation. Trust comes from interpersonal relationships. Agreement on a minimum standard (which includes a general agreement on ethics as well as on data protection) would set a professional norm which would facilitate closer cooperation. Such cooperation requires agreement on how data is collected, stored and shared. A few programmes have internal data security regulations but they either only include very basic information or coordinators were unable to share the agreement. Such documents are always works-in-progress, but sharing these examples as much as possible is encouraged in order to set a baseline and to assess, re-assess and improve data security documents and agreements. Agreements on how relocation programmes communicate with one another do not exist; these are crucial for collaboration. Rules and principles on safe data collection, sharing, analysis, storage and disposal need to be drafted and agreed upon by the community of practice. The rules on data protection issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) set out fundamental principles for the collection and sharing of (sensitive) data and could be a starting point for improved agreements between relocation initiatives (ICRC 2016).

Secure information-sharing
There is no clear mandate or formal structure between organisations to process or make referrals, nor is there an agreement, protocol or any written guidelines on (secure) information-sharing.

The reasons for which information about an applicant or a participant are not shared are comprehensible. If data were to fall into the wrong hands, it could put the applicants' safety and the organisations' reputation at risk. Less conspicuous is the idea that violations can arise from individuals being documented, leading to discrimination or exclusion even when data is in the right hands (Responsible Data 2016).

Given that much of the important information about an applicant or participant is confidential, trust plays a vital role in information-sharing. In day-to-day interactions, this means that where trust is absent, or when the partners in a private phone call with a TIRI representative have never cooperated with each other before, no sensitive information will be shared. Some initiatives do not share any information about an applicant in principle, as noted by an interview respondent:

> "It is our responsibility to not sharing any information. It is a difficulty with regard to security, privacy and to decide how many details should go in how many hands. We meet face-to-face and build personal trust and we are very, very careful in how we need to handle this."

This example is not unusual in the community of practice, as it showcases why face-to-face meetings are regarded with a high value, whether organised by the EUTRP or other networks or initiatives. These platforms often seem to be the only space where representatives of initiatives can speak with people they know and trust in a safe environment, whether one-to-one or in a small group. Face-to-face meetings also serve to build trust within the community of practice or a programme, as a respondent from a regional programme illustrates here:

> "Digital trust is not enough. It is really helping to have personal contact and sharing the same values. We have an oral agreement that what we share is confidential and we have secure messaging. I could talk with you about one client, but I will not send you the list [with details on individual clients]."

Another respondent who had just started to work with a relocation initiative further added:

> "There are not many possibilities to discuss something, so a gathering like in Berlin is really useful, even more because I don't have strong relations yet. I talked openly to the people I knew and to the people my colleagues know."

To provide an example of best practices for secure information-sharing, it is worth briefly describing the work of the Journalist in Distress Network (JiD). The JiD is a network of 18 member organisations that share sensitive information on a regular, sometimes daily, basis. They communicate via a secure platform

called Slack. When an application has been verified, it will be shared with the network. If an organisation can support a journalist, they "tag"[20] the request immediately, so others can see what is done and what more is needed. There are several channels on Slack organised by and for crisis situations; one channel is dedicated to cases in Syria, for example. The coordinators of the member organisations can quickly see the current state of affairs and what is needed in terms of support in the region in which they operate or in which they have partners. They can also see who is already working on the case to prevent duplication and to supplement the work of other coordinators.

In one case, as shared by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) – as the founding member of the JiD network and the secretariat – a journalist (from Syria) was stuck in Turkey and needed safe passage across several borders to arrive in France. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) was contacted for a visa to France, and other members of the network supported the person across the various borders along the way.

The JiD network bases its work on trust. All the members work with at-risk journalists who are in very sensitive situations. The members have face-to-face meetings every 18 months. Every two years, a mapping on role allocation and geographical location is undertaken. This task requires time, dedication and effort from all its members, but it is critical for the success of the network, according to one respondent from JiD. They explained that for the past ten years, the members of the network have come to know each other very well. When a number of turnovers took place, they hosted an emergency meeting to introduce new members to one another and to the network face-to-face. They have had a protocol in place for the past ten years which is updated regularly, and that, according to the respondents, all members respect. It is an agreement on how information should be shared on Slack, what information can and cannot be shared, and the members and organisations who have access to the platform. The network keeps

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[20] In Slack, all representatives of organisations in the network with authorized access can see what support has been requested. If a coordinator can provide support, they add a tag or a label to the HRD and follow up with whatever has already been done (to trace the activities, and see whether other needs are yet to be addressed).

access to the shared information restricted; in general, one resource person per organisation has access to the platform.

Agreement on personal data protection
It seems evident that a written agreement needs to be drafted both within the organisation (how to share information internally) as well as externally between organisations. How organisations handle data – including collection, sharing and analysis, as well as storage and disposal – can have a decisive impact on their reputation and effectiveness (Accenture 2016). For example, terms should be set of when and how confidential data will be destroyed to render it unreadable, irretrievable and inaccessible in any way.[21]

There are some issues that should be highlighted, based on the interviews:

1. **Legal liability implications of data collection, sharing, and storage**: The EU has new regulations pertaining to data collection, sharing and storage as of May 2018. Initiatives based or registered in the EU must comply with these EU regulations. For initiatives based in other countries, respective national or regional data regulations must be checked. To meet the requirements of all countries involved in initiatives that act globally, they would need to agree on the maximum standard.

2. **Written informed consent by the applicant to share certain information**: Some organisations provide a written consent form or stipulate in their guidelines the information that will be shared, the circumstances under which it will be shared, and the objective with which it will be shared.

3. **Ethical considerations:** Initiatives should add an ethical lens to how data is treated from collection to disposal. An ethical lens may be used to verify how the data is handled in every stage in order to prevent the unjust or illegal use of data. Data collection and systematisation may lead to discrimination of applicants or participants (e.g. racial biases), or it could be used without the consent of the applicant, or even without their knowledge.

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[21] Researchers writing studies like this one should also agree to dispose their data in an unretrievable way.

One respondent provided a practical example of cases in which ethical considerations were not taken into account; namely, on application forms for HRDs or artists at risk who apply for temporary relocation (in Europe): "Asking personal questions such as if you are HIV positive, or if you love men or women, this is discrimination."

Asking questions and treating information ethically requires a conscientious and well-informed approach that should be applied in each stage of the relocation cycle:

> "While the perspectives of security (is the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data adequately protected?) and privacy (are they in line with the current European and or other international agreed standards) remain relevant, added lenses for ethics and trust become critical. When organisations consider the ethics of data collection (starting already in the application forms, for example), and use of data, this will enable trust" (Accenture 2016: 3).

5   Referrals and collaboration in the relocation, return and follow-up phases

This chapter introduces, firstly, experiences and practices from the interviews and workshops related to participants' planning for return. This planning already takes place during the HRD´s stay abroad (phase 4: relocation stay). Urgency of the planning increases toward the end of relocation, and more acutely focuses on preparing for return (phase 5). These experiences and practices further have to do with how programmes stay in contact with their alumni (phase 6: follow-up) (Chapter 5.1). Secondly, this chapter presents experiences shared by programme representatives of situations in which defenders cannot return to their country of origin following the end of their relocation; and alternatives to return (including type C referrals) are discussed (Chapter 5.2). Finally, potentials for collaboration around return (or its alternatives) are identified, including data collection and information-sharing (Chapter 5.3).

5.1   Planning and following up upon return

All representatives of TIRIs indicated in the interviews that they have planning and monitoring of return integrated in their programmes. However, a comparative perspective reveals wide disparities between programmes with regards to when they start planning for the HRD´s return and how long they monitor after return.

Planning return

Only one programme representative mentioned that they discuss *before* the relocation starts the options and risks that might occur following HRDs' participation in a relocation programme: "You can't stay in this programme and these are your options." The defender can then make a well-informed decision not to join the temporary relocation programme. In the words of the respondent, "This is called respect for agency". Though discussing alternative scenarios is meant to be part of preparations and planning, it usually takes place during the period of relocation and not beforehand.[22]

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[22] The importance of early reflection and open conversation about the challenges of return is discussed in Seiden (2020, forthcoming).

A return plan always includes security assessments (some programmes do this once, whereas others do this several times throughout the relocation period). During relocation, the security situation of the country of origin is checked via the local organisation (the employer or liaison organisation of the defender) and via local partners of the TIRI, when feasible. All HRDs in relocation have a "go-to" person with whom they are regularly in touch; for example, a psychosocial coach or a health counsellor.[23] The HRD meets this individual on a regular basis to discuss the situation at home, among other topics. Thus, defenders' concerns can be immediately addressed at any point throughout relocation.

Some programmes also named reintegration planning as a part of the return plan. In this case, depending on the preferences of the defender, it includes planning for the initial period after they arrive home.

Following up with alumni after return
The majority of TIRIs perform an exit interview with HRDs at the end of their relocation stay in order to follow up with participants after they have returned to their home countries and to assess the impact of their programmes. The duration of further monitoring of the alumni following return varies from nearly non-existent to one year. In the case of CAHR, which is running the Protective Fellowship Scheme, an evaluation is undertaken 18 months after return. As part of a CAHR research project (University of York 2017), the entire fellowship is evaluated through personal interviews with the HRDs.

A meeting organised by Shelter City in Kenya offers a best practice example for following up with participants after return. In March 2019, the Dutch Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, organised a reception with the seven HRDs who were Shelter City guests in the Netherlands between 2015 and 2019. The meeting was hosted by the Dutch Ambassador, representatives of international NGOs and the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders. The objective of the meeting was to improve engagement with this group of HRDs, to keep abreast of their work since their return to Kenya and to discuss the impact of their participation

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[23] See „The Barcelona Guidelines on Wellbeing and Temporary International Relocation of Human Rights Defenders at Risk" and Bartley (2020).

in the Shelter City programme. As a result of this experience, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with several embassies, is planning to organise more follow-up meetings with Shelter City alumni in different countries.[24]

In general, following up after return involves little more than a phone call to be updated on how the return was experienced by the returning HRD and how their situation has developed since then. The majority of the initiatives follow up only once, one or three months following return. A few programmes are in more regular contact with the defender. In these cases, contact between defender and host programme were informal, and not officially part of the monitoring upon return phase.

A representative of a municipality participating in a relocation network elaborated on the challenges present to following up with defenders after they have returned home: "It is not in our mandate to engage with defenders beyond return, we also don't have the capacity. When one defender leaves, we need to focus on the preparation of the next guest."

Having a monitoring process in place would be one tool to measure the impact of the programme. This process would allow for an evaluation of the degree to which defenders feel safer, energised and better equipped to deal with the structural security challenges after participating in the programme. Through follow-up with the defenders, assessments can be carried out of the ability of temporary relocation programmes to not only impact the defenders themselves but also the environment around the HRDs, as this is ultimately TIRIs' vision.

Connecting fellow HRDs in the programme
Six TIRIs confirmed they are hosting a cohort of defenders at any given time, rather than hosting single individuals. For these relocation programmes, it may also become (increasingly) important to offer a communication platform so participants can stay in touch with each other. As numbers of alumni continue to grow, it seems opportune to further explore the potential of creating a broader

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[24] For a study on TIRI´s impact on HRD´s home communities with the example of Kenya, see Salome Nduta´s and Patrick Mutahi´s recent publication within the MRI research programme (Mutahi/Nduta 2020).

alumni network of people who participated in different programmes. A broader network could function as a safety net in the country of origin and foster and encourage solidarity between fellow defenders. In the event that a defender is threatened, members of the platform could immediately inform their networks and assist in locating support.

Alumni could also contribute to the preparation of relocation for new participants. If alumni and the new participants share a country of origin, both parties can meet and the alumni can share their experiences and support the defender with regard to questions and concerns that might come up before their relocation. Connecting alumni to one another has its own potentials, too. For instance, in the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network (PAHRN), some alumni have met one another and have remained in close contact, mutually supporting each other´s work. Respondents from various TIRIs either have an online platform for alumni which allows them to remain in contact, or they are planning to set up a user-friendly and secure platform. Several social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp groups are used by defenders, but they are not considered to be secure. One initiative representative spoke about their alumni communicating via a Signal group.

Staff members from Justice and Peace Netherlands and Shelter City Tbilisi, Georgia, are currently performing a survey among their alumni in order to inquire after their needs and preferences with regard to communicating with one another and what kind of information will enable them to stay in touch with each other and with the programme. The survey results will be used to offer a more secure alternative to the platforms currently in use.

5.2   Type C referrals and other alternatives if return is not possible

Political circumstances and security situations are determining factors in the defenders' ability to return which seldom improve within such a limited period of three or six months (Eriksson 2018: 497).

Risk assessment at the beginning of the relocation process is an important opportunity for the TIRIs to discuss the topic of return with the defenders in order

to address their considerations and perceived risks related to this issue. It is essential that the prospects for return are taken into account in this early phase. In practice, this is not routinely done but occurs on a case-to-case basis.

Extending the relocation… if possible

When a defender cannot return, typically the likelihood of return after an additional three months is assessed. If it is likely that the threats to the HRD will defuse, an extension of the relocation stay or a second relocation may be a good alternative. In some cases like in Costa Rica, Georgia and Lebanon, visas can typically be renewed for another 90 days. In the majority of TIRIs, however, extension of relocation is not possible and a second relocation programme must be secured. Systematic data on the likelihood of improved conditions for return after these 90 days would help programmes´ advocacy for more flexible visa arrangements.

Second relocation: type C referral

If both return and extension of the original relocation is not possible, a second relocation with another programme may become an option that could be facilitated by type C referrals. The support provided by TIRIs to the defender in the second relocation varies. When the defender decides that a second relocation is their best alternative to return, some initiatives then contact other TIRIs directly to ask for potentially available places in their programme. TIRI representatives explain that in cases of a second relocation, they will usually tap into their network of TIRIs whom they know and trust. Second relocation also depends on the defender and their specific needs. The situation of the defender is then discussed bilaterally, and if there is an opportunity, the TIRI will support them in meeting the requirements. Assistance to fill in the application forms of the second programme and also to act as a referee is often part of the support offered by the first programme. In the case that the first TIRI functions as a referee, the defender's personal information will be shared with the next relocation programme, provided that the defender gives their consent.

Applying for asylum

When extension options have been exhausted and an attempt at a second relocation has been unsuccessful or assessed as being infeasible, one final option is to apply for asylum. Almost all interviewed TIRI representatives were very clear

on whether asylum applications should be part of relocation initiatives: they do not support an asylum request because it is not in their mandate, they have neither capacity and nor their expertise. Some respondents also stated that applying for asylum undermines the objectives of their TIRI programming, e.g. strengthening the defender's skills and work as well as their community in their country of origin. If the participants in the relocation programme cannot remain active as defenders (which is all too often the consequence of being an asylum-seeker), their community is deprived of a defender that they are in need of.

Expectation management

Managing expectations is important from the start of the process. It should be made clear to the HRD that the relocation is temporary. The services that the programme and location can and cannot offer should also be laid out. Too often, solutions are sought for problems that are not in the mandate of the organisation. The TIRI´s intrinsic need to offer support can blur the framework of the programme. A representative from Shelter City Costa Rica explained that their organisation provides a contract between the organisation and the defender. It clearly states the terms of temporary relocation, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the defender and of the initiative. Such a contract between HRD and TIRI could add to expectation management from the start. Shelter City Netherlands, in turn, only has agreements with the cities hosting defenders, not with defenders themselves.

The fundamental basis of cooperation between different TIRIs is to demonstrate solidarity within their networks. Whilst it is clear that temporary initiatives cannot support permanent relocation, they can link defenders to other defender peers who made the decision to request for asylum, or connect them with individuals who find themselves in the same situation so they might be able to discuss the full range of possible options and consequences. As one respondent expressed, "I would wish that every person who would consider applying, would have a frank, friendly and open conversation with somebody who they trust and understand about all their various options."

When defenders cannot return to their countries of origin and the only option seems to apply for asylum, they are left on their own, with little knowledge of how to proceed or what to expect. Though TIRIs cannot support individuals in their application for asylum, every exit interview – or better still, conversations held much

earlier during the relocation cycle – should include a frank, friendly and open conversation about all options. There might be individuals in the TIRI's network who have applied for asylum and whom the defender could talk to.

5.3   Potentials for data collection and information-sharing upon return (and its alternatives)

Systematic follow-up and gathering of participant data following the end of the relocation period is also significant with respect to improving and further developing TIRIs. However, none of the interviewed representatives of relocation programmes were transparent about the percentage of participants who cannot return after the relocation period has ended. The majority of the respondents reported that they do not keep data on second relocations as a result of referrals or on the number of defenders who were able to return after extending their stay for another 90 days. None of the initiatives monitored defenders who applied for asylum or defenders who have returned but then needed to be relocated again. Retaining those data is one way of evaluating the programme and can provide a basis for further improvements of the procedures. If, for example, it was known that a high percentage of participants cannot return after three months, measures could be taken to tackle this issue at an earlier stage of the relocation process. Or it could be concluded that participants in general or from certain locations need more time. With systematic data, arguments to have more flexible visa policies would be based upon facts. This would improve the negotiating position of relocation initiatives vis-à-vis state actors.

As the previous sections show, all TIRIs that were interviewed in this study are struggling with monitoring data upon return. Programmes do see the value of monitoring upon return; in practice, however, this is not yet an integrated part of the relocation cycle. Collaboration could benefit from sharing knowledge on what different initiatives in this field have done on a more regular basis. As a positive example, during the course of this study, a regional programme in Kampala, Uganda, held a conference on how to set up a process to monitor return. Further, two Shelter City programmes ran a survey with defenders on how they would like to remain in contact following their return, both with each other and with the programme. Sharing this kind of information on a regular basis could provide more impulses for other programmes to enhance their efforts, too.

6   Recommendations for next steps

The aim of this study was to investigate how collaboration between different
TIRIs can be strengthened and to contribute to establishing a modus operandi.
In this regard, several recommendations stand out based on the analysis of infor-
mation gathered through 32 interviews and participation in two workshops.
These recommendations aim to contribute to the larger goal of providing con-
structive advice and next steps on the way to a more structured collaboration be-
tween relocation initiatives.

Defenders are commonly not involved in TIRI managers´ day-to-day discus-
sions and decisions on how to organize programmes more efficiently. However,
at-risk defenders should be at the centre of how TIRIs are constituted and func-
tion, as they are the whole reason for the existence of such programmes. All too
often they are only discussed in planning and evaluating interventions rather
than consulted.

The first step of collaboration is recognising shared values and goals. Such
consensus requires information-sharing and mutual trust between initiatives.
Often trust does not depend on procedures, guidance or agreements but on in-
terpersonal relationships which require in-person meetings. Once established,
these relationships can be maintained remotely. This is true in any network and
is no different for TIRIs. Once coordinators of TIRIs and other stakeholders have
established strong working relationships, agreements need to be made on how
to capitalise on working methods and guidelines. Two concrete examples (and
challenges) of more systematic collaboration were to systemise referrals and to
follow up on monitoring return.

The interviewees of this study agreed that steps need to be taken to better ex-
change information and to enhance collaboration between TIRIs. Some pro-
grammes have strengthened their communication and network meetings have
been set up. Recent research has also contributed to disseminating knowledge
and practices among relocation initiatives and have generated recommendations
on how TIRIs can work together better. In the following, the main recommenda-
tions from this study are presented.

Recommendation 1:
Reflect more clearly internally on what the mandates of TIRIs mean and com-
municate this more clearly externally.

TIRIs need to be transparent about what they can and what they cannot do for
the defenders they seek to protect. From the outset, the temporary nature of the
relocation must be made clear, as does the fact that initiatives are bound by im-
migration policies and the limitations of visa regulations.

TIRIs also need to acknowledge that no participant's assessment for eligibil-
ity for the programme (as in stage 2 of the relocation cycle) can be airtight. Clar-
ity on the requirements and capacities of the programme will help defenders
make more informed choices about the type of relocation they will benefit from,
the location best suited for them, and the preparations they need to make to be
able to return home to their families, jobs, and communities. Clarity surrounding
the duration of the temporary relocation should contribute to the formulation of
clear plans and expectations. No matter how comprehensive and well-thought
out such plans for return are, reality can take unforeseen turns. Lack of transpar-
ency on this point is unacceptable, as failure to do so will discredit the TIRI.
This, in turn, will make it more difficult for the defender and the host commu-
nity to make the stay as beneficial as possible. When a HRD cannot return as
planned, at least the TIRI can submit referrals to other TIRIs for additional time
away from the context of threat. These referrals should contain clear documenta-
tion of and planning for the eventual return. They should also reflect transpar-
ency about why return was not possible at that point in time.

In the event that it is clear from the outset that defenders will not be able to
return to their countries of origin, TIRIs need to consider whether relocating a
defender is actually within their mandate and if they are the right actor to inter-
vene. This is never an easy decision, but if TIRIs are to become more efficient in
future, they need to be stricter about adhering to their mandates.

Recommendation 2:
Include case referrals in the official mandate of TIRIs and their staff.

Many of the interview respondents described that they spend a lot of time doing activities around referrals that are not part of their job descriptions, and of which employers do not communicate their expectations. Furthermore, all respondents acknowledged they receive referrals and make referrals themselves, but all referrals were done on a case-to-case basis, ad-hoc and in most cases, only if a swift solution was not possible. This practice is highly problematic because it impacts negatively on the staff members and volunteers who feel they need to be able to make referrals, often in their private time, and especially in cases of emergencies, in order to meet the needs of the defenders they seek to support.

To recognise that referring defenders to other TIRIs and receiving referrals are part of the usual day-to-day functions of TIRIs is the first step to formalising them and making them part of staff job descriptions. Professionalisation is required to assess the staff's needs so that they will be able to successfully submit or process referrals and determine how much time they will spend on these activities. This way, the staff's position regarding their personal limits of time capacities and clarity on their tasks and responsibilities can also be strengthened. In addition, it is necessary to collaboratively assess what TIRIs need from each other in order to develop a constructive and structural approach toward the inclusion of referrals in the daily work of TIRIs.

It is recommended to organise a round table for TIRI managers on how assessments are performed by the various organisations. The objective of the round table would be to map the various methods and to agree on a minimum standard for referrals. Mappings or (anonymous) surveys to identify the types and characteristics of applicants and programme participants as well as the different selection criteria and variables influencing the set-up of relocation programmes and their selection processes (see Chapter 3) would be a first steps towards reconciling selection criteria and streamlining referrals. Donors can be included in the round table to brainstorm on further steps for systemising referrals. The topic of ethics should be part of such a discussion.

Recommendation 3:
Improve monitoring upon return and expectation management by discussing
risks of return prior to relocation.

It is recommended to discuss return and associated risks with the defender prior
to their relocation. The programme needs to make clear to the defender that a
temporary relocation comes with risks that are unforeseeable: the security situa-
tion in the country of the applicant may not change for the better so that they
cannot return and resume their work in a safe way. The risk of neither being able
to return to the country of origin, nor being able to stay in the host country is
real. Applicants should be made aware of these realities by the programme staff.
This creates a shared understanding and common expectations and will allow
the defender to weigh the risks and decide whether their relocation is worth
those risks and their potential consequences.

Developing a security plan for return or for its alternatives (in case return is
not an option) also helps improve monitoring upon return after the end of the
relocation phase. These measures include more systematic follow-up with the
defender and determining whether the return has gone as planned as well as
staying informed about the physical security and psychosocial wellbeing of the
defender.

Recommendation 4:
Foster systematic data collection and knowledge management to enhance
programme effectiveness

Within the community of TIRIs, very few reliable quantitative statistics are avail-
able. These include the following factors: How many applications do the differ-
ent initiatives receive? How many of these are given consideration, how many
are referred to other programmes and how many make it to the relocation
phase? How many defenders of those who are relocated return within the
planned timeframe and how many are relocated for a second term? How many
are ultimately never able to return to their homes? These are all crucial details
that could be used to assess the effectiveness of initiatives. Such information is
key to improving their performance and learning to better meet the challenges

that lie ahead. With more transparency and information-exchange, planning, implementation, and evaluation of effectiveness would be at available to stakeholders. Without it, as is the situation at present, the degree of effectiveness of various TIRIs make up an indecipherable black box.

Internally, steps should be taken to introduce a more systematic practice of recording information with regard to the processes and lessons learnt by relocation initiatives. This practice can secure both the institutional memory of the organisation and the sustainability of the initiative. This could also be used as a basis for exchanging best and worst practices with other relocation initiatives at a later stage.

Knowledge management is not an end in itself; it is a means to improve the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of experiences of individuals involved in TIRIs´ coordination work. Since the exchange of knowledge is often based on interpersonal relationships, having processes and systems to store implicit knowledge is of value. When implicit knowledge is not formalised, turnover of staff will potentially lead to a loss of all interpersonal relationships between TIRIs, and thus to a loss of cooperation.

The recording of best practices is one example of implicit knowledge that should be stored institutionally. Worst practices and lessons learnt should also be recorded and shared, and more effort should be made to render the collection and storing of best practices part of internal organisational processes. Monitoring and evaluation should be standard for every TIRI.

Recommendation 5:
Demystify information-sharing and develop ethics on data protection and secure communication.

Trust has come out as the primary prerequisite for better cooperation between TIRIs. Lack of trust is often cited as the reason for which information is not exchanged. With different funding sources and slight differences in mandates, organisations will always naturally feel the need to protect their own territory. In

one aspect, this competition is a positive drive that keeps organisations alert. However, mandates of the various TIRIs are all highly similar and what is ultimately important is supporting defenders who need temporarily relocation because they face risks or because they need a respite. In addition, the demand for temporary safe spaces is much higher than the supply. Collaboration is needed now more than ever as several new relocation initiatives are being initiated in Africa, Latin America and Asia.[25] Sharing practices are vital to the success of these new initiatives.

By demystifying information-sharing – e.g. about assessment procedures and applications – it will become apparent that such sharing does not endanger defenders. On the contrary, information-sharing makes their lives easier and will enhance their mobility in the world of TIRIs, if need be. TIRIs have a whole toolbox of electronic instruments to scramble and encrypt information, yet the most crucial information is often exchanged via telephone, which is a notoriously insecure medium. This tendency suggests that it is sometimes not the information about the defender that is sensitive but rather it is a question of how much TIRIs are willing to share information about their own internal working procedures, including sensitive issues, such as weaknesses of their programme. The reality appears to be that the respondents were willing to share information with people they know well and with whom they think understand how things work (i.e. who have shared values).

If TIRIs are transparent about what they do, how and why, exposing elements of one's internal organisation and administration to others becomes a less sensitive practice. This convention then allows for a better understanding of which pieces of information about the defender (status of assessment, return plan, reasons for referrals, etc.) can be shared and which need to remain strictly confidential. This sharing of best practices should contribute to a common understanding of what needs to be done to improve TIRIs and much more information on what really matters in serving defenders can be discussed.

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[25] One example of efforts to improve coordination is the following: the EUTRP network met in Barcelona in October 2019, where it was agreed that more support and resources would be dedicated to new TIRIs in regions that are currently underserved. These initiatives are to be supported with EUTRP funding.

It is recommended as a first step towards more collaboration to come to an agreement on how information is to be shared securely and responsibly. Organisations should develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for both their internal communication, and for the sharing of information and data with other TIRIs as well. These SOPs should further be adopted by all TIRIs in a network so that there is consensus concerning what is shared and how it is shared to foster stronger collaboration and coordination within that network. SOPs should include common digital spaces, secure digital communication applications and e-mail platforms to avoid a multitude of apps and systems which actually undermine security rather than strengthen it. The phrasing of these SOPs can build on similar documents that are mainstreamed by organisations, providing emergency relief in humanitarian and conflict areas. Based on shared information, ethical guidelines should be drafted and agreed upon by TIRIs as a prerequisite for collaboration. The minimum norm of an ethical checklist should be completed for every phase in the relocation cycle.

Recommendation 6:
Promote joint advocacy by relocation initiatives.

Stronger relationships and cooperation agreements mean that TIRI networks can be more strategic and can engage in joint advocacy, thereby exerting a more influential (and international) voice. For instance, it is advisable to develop a common point of advocacy in negotiations with hosting governments for more flexible visa arrangements. A good example of the need for common advocacy is the strategic positioning of TIRIs from Europe in the EUTRP: rather than negotiating with individual governments, this network could negotiate options for visas for defenders across the EU with the European Union directly.

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Annex:

Overview on interviewed representatives of TIRIs and their geographical coverage

In total, 32 interviews were conducted among 18 different TIRIs. While most of the respondents agreed to share the name of the programme they represented, others preferred to stay anonymous. Efforts were made to speak to both small and large programmes (six of the 18 programmes were identified as being small initiatives[26]), programmes with a long-standing track record and newer programmes (with global coverage), and programmes hosting artists and HRDs. A differentiation was made between global programmes hosting HRDs from all over the world and regional programmes hosting HRDs from designated countries in that region. While this was the point of departure for the selection of different programmes, language barriers made interviewing representatives of initiatives in Latin America and the Caucasus a challenge. The low profile that the organisations in the Caucasus were trying to maintain further complicated this endeavour. To summarise the geographic coverage of TIRIs whose representatives were interviewed:

- Europe: 11 representatives of eight programmes were interviewed, including two university-based initiatives (Scholars at Risk and CAHR at the University of York).

- Asia: two representatives were interviewed (Forum Asia and Inform Sri Lanka).

- Latin America: one representative was interviewed (Shelter City Costa Rica).

- Africa: three representatives of five organisations were interviewed, including: Shelter City Dar es Salaam, which just erected a second Shelter City in Benin; DefendDefenders[27], which is the Secretariat of the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network (PAHRDN), also known as African Defenders, which recently set up the African Ubuntu Hub Cities (beginning of 2019).

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[26] Respondents who only hosted one or two HRDs per year characterised themselves as being small initiatives.

[27] The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders (EADHRD) rebranded itself as DefendDefenders.

- USA: two representatives were interviewed (Artist at Risk Connection and City of Asylum Pittsburgh)

- Caucasus: two representatives were interviewed.

Of all organisations interviewed, five are networks: ICORN (74 cities worldwide), Shelter City (12 cities in the Netherlands and five beyond), PEN International, JiD (18 member organisations) and Ubuntu Cities (six cities in three countries).

Almost all interviews were done using online communication tools (Jitsi, Skype, Wire, Signal, WhatsApp and Zoom)

List of abbreviations

AHRN African Human Rights Network
ARC Artists at Risk Connection
CAHR Centre for Applied Human Rights
ICCPR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
CPJ Committee to Protect Journalists
EAHRD East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders – Defend Defenders
EU European Union
EUTRP European Union Temporary Relocation Platform
HRD Human Rights Defender
ICORN International City or Refuge Network
ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross
ifa Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen
ISHR International Service of Human Rights
JiD Journalists in Distress Network
MENA Middle East and North Africa
MRI Martin Roth-Initiative
NGO Non-governmental organisation
OHCHR Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights
PAHRDN Pan-African Human Rights Network
PEN Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, and Novelists
RSF Reporters sans Frontières (Reporters without borders)
SOPs Standard operating procedures
TIRI Temporary International Relocation Initiative

About the author

Nathalie van Schagen finished her MA in Development Studies in 2006 and has been active in the field of human rights ever since. She has worked with Justice and Peace Netherlands for many years and was part of an international team of HRDs that drafted a declaration to request The Hague to become the first Shelter City in the Netherlands. Protection of HRDs has always been at the heart of her work, whether in action research, in fighting violence against women by engaging men or facilitating workshops on how to frame one's rights for and with local partners. Currently Nathalie lives with her family in Kathmandu, Nepal. She advises Nepal Monitor.org on issues related to the protection of HRDs. She is a supporter of Kathmandu Shelter City. She is also a member of the Project Committee of Peace Brigades International (PBI) for Nepal.

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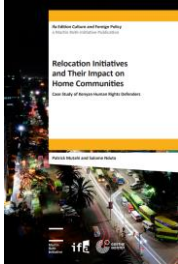
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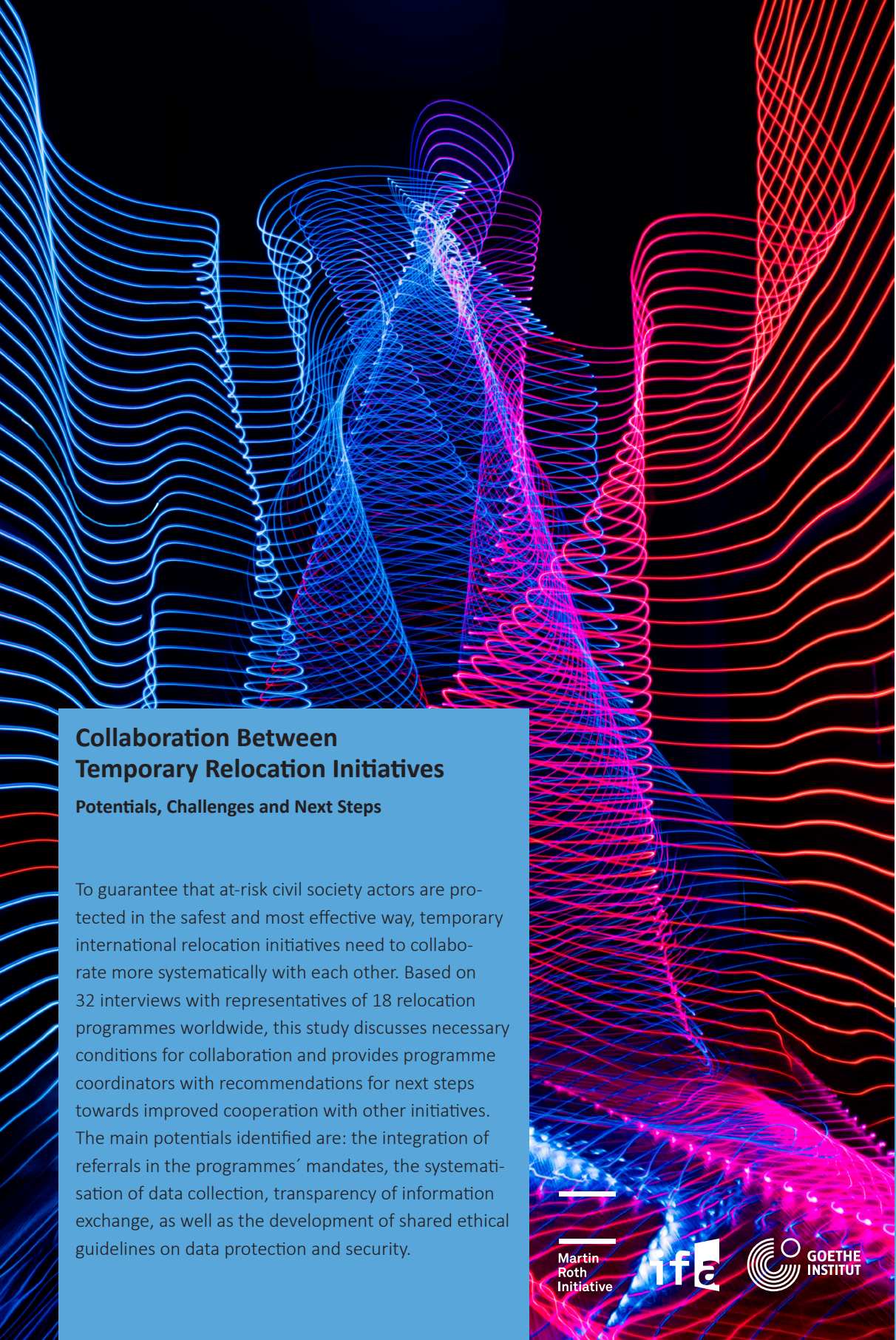and Foreign Policy – a Martin Roth-Initiative Publication)

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Collaboration Between Temporary Relocation Initiatives

Potentials, Challenges and Next Steps

To guarantee that at-risk civil society actors are protected in the safest and most effective way, temporary international relocation initiatives need to collaborate more systematically with each other. Based on 32 interviews with representatives of 18 relocation programmes worldwide, this study discusses necessary conditions for collaboration and provides programme coordinators with recommendations for next steps towards improved cooperation with other initiatives. The main potentials identified are: the integration of referrals in the programmes´ mandates, the systematisation of data collection, transparency of information exchange, as well as the development of shared ethical guidelines on data protection and security.

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