



## Developing the tools

Since its creation in 1982, HURIDOCS has shown leadership by using technology to respond to expressed needs. It has worked systematically and creatively at problem solving using databases, controlled vocabularies, the Internet, as well as other technologies and techniques which are applicable to human rights. These tools and techniques improve the ability of organisations to monitor situations, document events, systematically record information, retrieve it in required ways and communicate it. Tool development is a primary component of the HURIDOCS Capacity-Building Programme. Two current projects are noted below:

### **Semantic Web**

This new and innovative project will embrace the latest information and communication technologies and apply them to the communication of information about human rights violations. Partners from the human rights, scientific and software development worlds have reinforced the need for such a tool. The Semantic Web project will build on existing HURIDOCS tools including:

- Micro-thesauri: controlled vocabularies which will allow precise classification
- the Events Formats which provide a data model for describing human rights events
- WinEvsys, a relational database for recording and handling information on human rights events
- HuriSearch, the specialised human rights search engine

In its first stage, this project will include activities to promote the adoption of Dublin Core metadata standards for the description of human rights Web pages, so that they can be more easily retrieved. The project will also adapt the latest web tools and standards for the human rights community, particularly XML (Extensible Markup Language) - the standard data exchange format for the web. Specific XML implementations will be leveraged starting with:

- RSS (Rich Site Summary) format for syndicating news and the content of news-like sites enhancing real time communication of human rights news
- RDF (Resource Description Framework) to bring much needed semantic value to the millions of human rights web pages

The output in 2006 will be a new HURIDOCS website as a simple demonstration of basic semantic web features, recommendations for future development and collaboration with others who recognise the need for this cutting edge human rights resource.

### **Evsys**

Many human rights organisations have a need for a comprehensive, user-friendly and adaptable database to record, manage and retrieve information about cases of human rights violations. HURIDOCS demonstrated leadership in responding to this need in the late 1980s by beginning to work on this innovative project and by developing a database program for this purpose.

WinEvsys, programmed in the widely used Microsoft Access platform, allows users to manage information about human rights events, the persons involved and other relevant information. The detailed definition of fields allows for the generation of data that can be organised and displayed in numerous ways. At the same time, it is very flexible and can be modified by users to suit their particular needs. It is enabled to run in many languages. The next steps in developing Evsys are:

- a meeting of the Evsys design team to plan future adaptations
- adaptations of WinEvsys for use in documenting torture, women's issues, and children's issues; for communication and reporting requirements; and for specific needs requested by Non-governmental organisations, Inter-governmental organisations and National Human Rights Institutions.
- initiating the programming of Evsys in Open Source software.