



Hello Thalia,

This is a shorter newsletter than normal, but also a more important one, driven by one fact: we have a short window of opportunity to expand HRMI's data collection to capture a picture of how countries treat their people, *before and after COVID-19*.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only causing worry and anxiety for people as they face a scary illness and, for many, a loss of livelihood. It's also testing the strength of our countries' systems for respecting and protecting human rights. As the HRMI survey collecting data for 2019 draws to a close, we are already thinking ahead to what next year's data will show about what is happening right now, in 2020.

Many countries around the world are rightly restricting people's freedom of assembly and movement in the interests of public health. But some are going further and also repressing freedoms of opinion and expression and there are reports that some may be using COVID-19 as a pretext for detaining people without cause. In this environment, good data will be essential for showcasing best and worst practices and giving countries the impetus to do things better.

We are already collecting civil and political rights data on many countries that are currently in the headlines of COVID-19 news for having a significant number of cases: South Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom, for example, and other countries like New Zealand which has managed to contain the virus with more success, so far. We are very keen to expand our annual coverage to include China and the other Asian countries with experience of SARS in 2003 who seem to have been best prepared for implementing containment measures. Which countries will most successfully ensure ongoing protection and respect for human rights while also limiting the death toll and mitigating the economic impact?

The HRMI team is already globally distributed and used to working remotely, so we are calmly continuing to press on with this important work. We invite you to be part of our efforts to expand our country coverage so we can provide the world with important data on how COVID-19 affects the human rights situation in as many countries as possible.

Can you help connect us to funders who can help fund an expansion of our survey country coverage in time for the 2021 annual survey?

In the area of economic and social rights, one of our greatest strengths is that we already have data for most countries in the world. But we need more resources to help tell the stories embedded in our data and empower people to use them for advocacy. It's powerful data! For example, we've all been washing our hands a lot lately, as we do our part to prevent the spread of COVID-19. I'm sure you can appreciate, perhaps more than ever, that it's hard to practise good hand hygiene if your home doesn't have running water.

On that note, our economic and social right scores show how well countries are doing compared to what's realistically possible at their level of income. So we can tell you, for example, that if India were using its available resources as effectively as the best-performing countries in its income bracket, an estimated extra 560 million people would enjoy the right to water – captured in HRMI's [right to housing](#) indicators. That's over half a billion people who would have a better chance of protecting themselves from infection, if their government prioritised the provision of basic water infrastructure.

Can you help connect us to funders who can help fund expansion of our economic and social rights team, to tell these kinds of stories?

We want to get this kind of important analysis into the hands of policy-makers and activists who can build a better world in the wake of COVID-19, and get countries' resources directed more effectively to where they can improve the lives of people.

In January we started working on a draft [Strategic Plan](#) setting out HRMI's priorities for the coming three years. I can summarise those priorities in three words: Expansion. Expansion. Expansion. If you'd like to give us feedback on what you think our specific expansion priorities should be, I encourage you to spend 3 minutes filling in our [Strategic Plan feedback survey](#). It also provides space for you to help connect us to new funding partners.

One of the most difficult things right now is dealing with uncertainty. None of us knows how this is going to play out. But we do know that eventually, a year or more from now, COVID-19 will be behind us. Right now our job is to make sure we learn the most we can from this unique moment in history, and make sure that when the world rebounds it does so in a more positive direction.

Kia kaha (stand strong)

Kia ora (be healthy)

Ka aroha (with love)

Anne-Marie

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## HRMI Draft Strategic Plan out for consultation

We invite you to read our Draft Strategic plan as a [PDF download](#) and then give us your feedback through a very short [survey](#).

We value your input. Thank you in advance for your time and ideas.

## COVID-19 and human rights

Our team has put together [an article](#) summarising some of the major human rights issues that are arising as the world responds to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have focused on both the need for vigilance as freedoms are restricted to contain the virus, and also some opportunities for building a better world in the wake of the immense international disruption it brings.

Please do share the article with colleagues as appropriate.

[Click here for this latest article.](#)

## Coming soon

We have a lot of other news which we will share with you soon, with updates on:

- who's using our data
- three new HRMI team members, leading work on Pacific data, and the human rights enjoyment of LGBTQIA+ people
- the successful completion of the 2020 annual survey
- our upcoming 2020 data launch
- a revamp of our Rights Tracker website
- our latest articles.

Stay tuned, and stay safe.

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