

## HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES MANAGEMENT — SYNTHESIS REPORT

This study of the management of human rights issues is one in a series of studies undertaken by SIXE on the role of the political and economic officer. The theme is also an entry point for understanding general aspects of managing thematic issues and, indeed, for discussing management in DFAIT in general. The report presents our main findings on the nature of the officers' work in managing these issues, and identifies the priority areas that need to be addressed to enhance DFAIT's performance. The appended material includes case studies of human rights management in multilateral and bilateral contexts, as well as much of the data upon which these findings and conclusions are based.

### **1.0 Nature of the Work on Managing Human Rights Issues**

The information collected on the nature of the political and economic officers' work in managing human rights issues may be summarized into six main findings.

#### **1.1 The work patterns of political/economic officers suggest commitment and hard work, but no special status for their human rights work.**

Political and economic officers work hard — they put in a total of 47 hours a week on average. They tend to have similar general work responsibilities and only minor variations in work patterns across different branches, locations or levels (from FS-1 to EX-2). They spend the bulk of their time (about 25 hours per week) managing issues or managing information and another 14 hours a week coordinating events or tending to administrative and management duties.

Political and economic officers average five hours a week on human rights issues (this increases to 6.2 hours in P Branch and 6.9 hours in A Branch). Although they have high personal expectations for their human rights work, they do not consider it more meaningful than their other work, nor do they feel stressed about it. Over half of the surveyed officers had completed formal human rights training and now consider themselves adequately trained.

#### **1.2 Patterns of tasking, service and influence tend to be within rather than outside DFAIT.**

The vast majority of officers report handling no more than five human rights cases in the past six months. They tend to be tasked by, and provide services to, people in DFAIT rather than in OGDs or outside of government altogether. This is consistent with their role as policy advisers or managers of information.

With regards to this work, officers believe they have more influence on people inside than outside of the department. They associate the influence they have with the amount of time they work on human rights issues — the more they work, the more influence they believe they have. They believe they are more influential in these areas when their role is clear, when the work is well-managed and efforts are coordinated, when they enjoy positive relations with external groups, and when they are personally committed to the human rights agenda.

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