

Area of Activity IV: Service to the Human Rights Community

Rationale

All scientists – behavioral, life, physical, and social – have skills and knowledge of potential benefit to the human rights community. By providing timely, accurate, and verifiable data for human rights claims, scientists can help human rights organizations carry out more effective, evidence-based advocacy. Scientists can also assist with testing and evaluation of human rights projects and programs to ensure they benefit the intended populations. Analysis that is widely viewed as objective and based in evidence will buttress the credibility of human rights organizations and their claims. That all scientists have valuable tools and expertise to contribute is noted from the very important contributions that physical scientists (e.g., geospatial technologies) and life scientists (e.g., forensic and genetic sciences) have made to, for example, documenting human rights violations and identifying victims. This suggests that it would be valuable to build ongoing communication between the scientific and human rights communities to determine where and how quantitative and qualitative approaches and scientific tools and technologies can be useful to human rights work, and then assist in making these accessible to human rights practitioners.

Objectives

- Effective channels for communication between scientists and human rights groups;
- Direct involvement of diverse segments of the scientific community with human rights work; and
- Enhanced capacity of human rights practitioners to apply scientific methods, tools, and technologies in their work.

Content

- Determine what types of human rights work/issues might benefit from what types of scientific expertise (e.g., data collection, data evaluation, data analysis);
- Identify existing scientific resources used by human rights practitioners (or available for use) and successful collaborations between the scientific and human rights communities;
- Encourage scientists to volunteer their time and expertise to the human rights community through the AAAS “On-call” Scientists and other voluntary networks (e.g., GIS Corps, American Statistical Association Special Interest Group on Volunteerism);
- Promote the application of scientific techniques and methods by the human rights community through a variety of means (e.g., courses, fora, clinics, seminars);
- Develop dissemination strategies to publicize the value of collaboration between scientists and human rights practitioners; and
- Develop guidelines for scientists’ involvement that include conditions necessary for such involvement.

Support

- Human: volunteer instructors for short courses on scientific methods
- Material: information materials; meetings with human rights organizations focused on specific issues