

Executive summary, external evaluation of *Human Rights Live Here – Stop Forced Evictions in Africa Project*

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Purpose and methodology

This evaluation has the purpose of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of an Amnesty International (AI) project which aimed at stopping forced evictions in Africa. It is intended to inform future strategies as well as wider thinking on AI's role in community mobilisation and on the management of complex international projects.

The evaluation draws on a review of internal and published documentation, a web-survey of AI staff and interviews with a range of internal and external stakeholders. During visits to Kenya and Zimbabwe in late July / early August, the evaluation team solicited the input of journalists, NGO staff and people living in slums and / or exposed to forced evictions. In total, around 25-30 rights-holders contributed to the evaluation.

Findings

The project is fundamentally sound. It has, in the six states subject of most activities, established or reinforced AI as an organisation engaged on forced evictions and housing rights. The project provided a framework and expanded the scale and intensity of campaigning activities open to AI. Not every activity worked well in every setting, but the range of options available allowed country teams, sections and partners to employ tactics well-matched to context. Outcomes have been strongest in terms of movement from governments and empowerment of slum residents. There is a greater sense of fragility about regional policy outcomes and impact on media and public perceptions. Overall, results to date represent a reasonable return on AI's investment, although AI will need to ensure adequate follow-up to secure the progress made.

Project strategy

The basic rationale for the project is that slums encapsulate poverty and serve to "*illustrate that poverty and violations of human rights are inextricably connected*"¹. The project has four areas of intervention: enabling slum dwellers to stand up for their rights; local lobbying and activism; international lobbying and activism; and media work². There are several key aspects to the approach attempted:

- mobilisation of rights-holders as a means to the end of policy and practice change *and* an end in itself;
- a balance between – and attempted complementarity of – expert advocacy towards

¹ *Human rights live here: Stop forced evictions in Africa*, project proposal; page 1.

² The project focused on eight countries organised in three tiers with Kenya, Nigeria and Egypt as the top priority, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Chad in a second tier and Angola and Equatorial Guinea as countries for reactive work only. In practice, levels of activity in Zimbabwe and Ghana were at least as great as in Egypt, given local sections' activism in the case of the former and fast-moving and hugely significant political change in the latter.

- authorities and engagement with, and mobilisation of, slum residents;
- constructive engagement with local and national authorities, including the police;
- an emphasis on strong audio-visual presence as the medium of outreach into slum communities and as a motivating and mobilising sign of intent from AI;
- cultivation of synergies between local / national and regional / international activities.

Project activities and outcomes

National advocacy

AI engaged constructively with governments at local and national level. African sections entered into dialogue with governments on a scale and with a range of actors previously beyond their reach. AI played a key facilitating role to bring slum dwellers into direct contact with government. In Kenya, the effect has been that AI evolved a good relationship with key officials which now see it as an ally more than an irritant, while in Zimbabwe, some parts of government (and Parliament) seek AI out for policy input.

On some occasions – such as with local officials in Ghana – there are grounds for suspicion as to the usefulness of dialogue with government. But in most settings, governments have acknowledged the issues which AI and its partners have raised. Governments have spoken out against forced evictions (e.g. Ghana), softened their language (e.g. Nigeria) and felt moved to visit slums (e.g. Zimbabwe).

Policy and practice gains include positive language on ESCR and on active participation in the draft new Constitution and in policy relating to evictions and upgrading in Kenya; the reduction of the threat of evictions and the compensation of 'evictees' in Chad; and the inclusion of children resident in slums in the formal education system in Zimbabwe.

While positive rhetorical commitments were made in Ghana and Nigeria, recent evictions in both countries represent a step backwards. That the authorities in Port Harcourt still engage AI and its partners suggests that the new evictions are not a reversal of attitude, but proof of the contingency of progress on individual whims and political developments beyond AI's control.

Regional advocacy

AI worked to a logic that activities at national-level preceded regional advocacy which would have been less legitimate and effective without it. AI's advocacy towards the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) contributed to the adoption of *Principles and Guidelines on the Implementation of ESCR* in November 2010, while relationships have been built with key Commissioners. The goal of an ACHPR resolution on housing rights was fast-tracked through the NGO Forum stage following the intervention of a presentation by slum dwellers, enabled by AI. The ACHPR can be expected to adopt a resolution, but, even more so than at the national level, regional advocacy bears fruit only over a longer time horizon than that of the project itself. This is particularly true in the case of inter-governmental

organisations (IGOs) with which AI's relationships are new, such as the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) or thin, such as the African Union.

Advocacy towards AMCHUD was the focus on concerted campaigning during the March 2012 Week of Action. AI won a level of access to Housing Ministers which it had not had before and was invited to meet the Chair of AMCHUD's Permanent Secretariat. For AI internally, there is value in the Week of Action in its 'proof of concept', that is, AI's ability to deliver meaningful activities across several African countries. In total, around 6,000 slum residents were mobilised in six countries, demonstrating the potential of southern activism and acting as an important element to the goal of empowering rights-holders.

While the regional nature of the campaign and the ability to present a united front of slum residents from different countries has carried weight with regional IGOs, the reverse effect – the impact of IGO decisions at national-level – seems to have been less significant.

Media and public perceptions

Media outputs designed for international audiences were not well-integrated into wider campaigning strategies. Lack of enthusiasm for, and use of, the Human Rights Journey web concept³ illustrates the gap between what the IS imagines sections to need for the Demand Dignity campaign and what sections actually need. Developed by AI Netherlands, *Slum Stories*⁴ video clips should have better chimed with sections' needs, but were also under-utilised. In producing this output, AI Netherlands took on some IS functions, but lacked control of channels for promoting *Slum Stories* and for shaping the strategies into which *Slum Stories* were plugged. This case illustrates how devolving responsibility for producing materials and for coordination increases the resources applied to these functions, but to work well, sections taking on these roles need guidance in navigating IS systems to ensure efficiency and take-up.

The key audio-visual output produced for use in-country – the Slum Radio Project – fell through in Nigeria following the withdrawal of the local partner, but in Kenya and Ghana has acted as a breakthrough activity, opening journalists' eyes to stories about slum dwellers. In Zimbabwe too, AI acted as a conduit between journalists and slum residents. But AI is still in the early stage of mobilising journalists: while project outputs have immediate results in terms of coverage, whether the media take a sustained interest in slums can only be judged further down the line. There are question marks over how this work is to be followed up and what the contribution of regional or international media work is within campaign strategies.

Neither campaigning nor media work target public audiences in a particularly sophisticated way, seeming to rely on volume of activities getting through to large numbers of people. Pinning down a clearer strategic rationale for seeking to influence public opinion is essential if

³ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/campaigns/demand-dignity/issues/slums/rights-journey/evidence/slums>

⁴ <http://www.slumstories.org/>

this aspect of the project is to evolve into something more than an aspiration.

Mobilisation and organisation of rights-holders

The project has had a transformative effect on individual slum residents' skills and knowledge: across project countries, residents with whom AI has engaged have become better organized and articulate and have a strong sense of ownership over an ESCR agenda. The ability of slum residents to think and act beyond their own interests, and beyond issues affecting only their district or even their own country, is a critical indicator of mobilisation. An informal network of resident-activists has been fostered across the project countries. AI's role in this network shows an evolution from its traditional protective role towards local activists to that of facilitator of activists' access to authorities, working alongside them in seeking policy and attitudinal change. At AMCHUD and at the ACHPR, exposing regional officials to the direct advocacy of slum residents had a powerful effect on perceptions and on openness to AI's positions.

At an organisational level, AI has boosted the capacity of partner NGOs, seeded the formation of new organisations and added weight to coalitions engaged on housing rights. In Zimbabwe, a Coalition against Forced Evictions (CAFE) coordinates advocacy and responds to threats to activists. That slum residents in Mutare have engaged with Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights in taking a case against their local Council shows that linkages between CAFE members are not dependent on AI mediation.

In Kenya, AI has expanded the reach of a Gender Defenders' Network and nurtured activists' confidence in public speaking, among other skills. AI has carefully, but actively contributed to the work of a Housing Coalition, avoiding being perceived as trying to own or dominate the network. There is some concern – in Kenya and elsewhere – that coalition-working involves taking decisions on policy lines and public messages at a pace quicker than that which AI is used to. AI's systems may still need to catch up with the demands of working with others, perhaps less in terms of how quickly individual policy questions are dealt with and more at the planning level in factoring in these transactional costs.

Project design and management

The project falls within the slums strand of AI's global Demand Dignity campaign. It built on existing streams of work of both AI country teams and sections in Africa. However, the scale and complexity of the project and the only quite broad guidance given by the project proposal raised challenges in converting it into concrete plans. Some activities – such as Slum Ambassadors, the mobilisation of a set of renowned Africans to promote and represent AI's campaign – proved infeasible, while other aspects to the project, including its policing and its audio-visual elements, received less attention than was desirable, at least initially. The inputs needed to deliver the project were underestimated in several areas, including media, policy advice and regional advocacy and coordination. Overall, these challenges were well-handled:

gaps were filled and, as with the G-SLUM idea, activities re-shaped according to a clearer rationale than the proposal had outlined⁵.

The decision to assign project coordination to the Africa Regional Campaigns Coordinator (RCC) and to operate within existing management structures, rather than creating a project manager function with cross-program authorities, appears to have been the right one. But this role demanded more of the RCC's time than the notional 50% allotted to it and diverted his capacities away from regional campaigning and advocacy work itself, some of which was undertaken by an additional Campaign Coordinator, Demand Dignity (Africa, Slums) dedicated to the project.

A satisfactory standard of project coordination would have been if AI had just about managed to 'keep all the balls in the air'. In this case, AI has done better than that. The forming of links among project stakeholders and mutual learning accruing from those links is proof that project coordination has succeeded in an organic rather than a purely *dirigiste* way.

There have been issues of cross-programme management within the IS and between IS teams and sections, but these seem a consequence either of project design – underestimation of the input of the Media and Policy Programmes – or of broader organisational weaknesses. The project has coped with these failings more than represented a breakthrough in them.

Key lessons and recommendations

Continued work on housing in at least four countries is essential for the gains made in this project to be secured. Central resources are committed in the Africa and Policy Programmes and local sections in Ghana, Kenya and Zimbabwe are also in it for the long haul.

Recommendation 1: to secure the sustainability of the project, AI will need to pin down how central resources are to be allocated and ensure that plans are both realistic and of a scale sufficient to capitalise upon the achievements made to date.

The strategy behind influencing media and public perceptions has not always been clear, nor has a well-resourced, integrated approach been employed, yet deep and lasting impact in these areas needs ongoing engagement at country level.

Recommendation 2: the contribution of regional and international media work should be better articulated in campaign strategies and there needs to be a tighter strategic logic as to the role that influencing public perceptions in particular plays in overall country strategies.

⁵ The original G-SLUM idea was for a mass campaigning event to run in parallel with a summit of the G8 or G20. The basic idea was retained, but the target switched to the March 2012 AMCHUD in Nairobi. This reorientation served to line AI activism up against a forum with an exclusive focus on the issues AI was raising and avoided AI's messages being lost amidst the noise of other campaign groups engaged on other subjects, as would have been the case at a G8 or G20 meeting.

In the project countries, AI has given varying levels of priority to work *against* forced evictions and work *for* better service provision. This is sound insofar as it reflects the specifics of severity and opportunity in each country. But looking ahead, there is work to do to ensure uniform understanding and confidence in pressing governments to fulfil economic and social rights.

The project repeats and reflects wider AI weaknesses in understanding and applying a gender perspective. AI either lacks the skills to perform systematic gender analysis or may be afraid that to do so would oblige it to make gender a prominent part of every project.

Recommendation 3: increase confidence to a high, common standard across AI in engaging in propositional research and campaigning on ESCR and in applying a gender mainstreaming approach.

The greater experience and expertise of local NGOs have made AI cautious about how to enter into the field of housing rights. At the same time, AI's clout and financial resources act as a motor to playing a leading role.

Recommendation 4: maintain modesty and sensitivity in partnership-working with more established NGOs.

In a context of lesser resources, AI needs to focus and sustain advocacy at regional level to generate greater reverberation of regional activities and outcomes at national-level.

Recommendation 5: clarify the scope of further engagement of regional IGOs and lay out how regional outcomes can be deployed in campaigning at national-level.

A lot of what AI has attempted in this project in terms of community mobilisation and partnership-working, as well as certain activities and outputs, is new, at least in scope if not in substance. A reduction in central resourcing should not mean that the different streams of country work are allowed to become detached and isolated from each other.

Recommendation 6: ensure sharing of experience among country teams and sections in relation to community mobilisation and to partnership-working.

The project cannot only be evaluated at the conclusion of the formal funding period. Its results will continue to accrue beyond this period, with the extent of further positive outcomes being dependent on follow-up activities.

Recommendation 7: ensure that monitoring systems remain live even as the pressure of external accountability to the funder is lifted.