



TECHNOLOGY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS - EVALUATION OF THE SCIENCE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT 2008–2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The Science for Human Rights project (previously known as Satellites for Human Rights) was a pilot project which ran from January 2008 to January 2011. Its primary purpose was to test the potential use of geospatial technologies for human rights impact. The goal of the Satellites for Human Rights Project was to use satellite imagery and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to document human rights crises in the Global South, offering the potential for more effective advocacy and impact while simultaneously making scientific advancements in the human rights applications of these technologies. Geospatial technologies include radar and high resolution satellite imagery, aerial photography, geo-visualization tools and geo-referenced images, and the use of GPS devices in field research.

The project was delivered in partnership between the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Amnesty International USA and Amnesty International's International Secretariat (IS) and was funded by the Oak Foundation. A dedicated team, the Science for Human Rights team (SHR), was established at Amnesty International USA to run the project.

This evaluation was conducted by Helen Nelson and Alexandra Hernandez-Moreno of the Learning and Impact Unit (LIU) at the IS of Amnesty International with the support and assistance of the SHR team at Amnesty International USA. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which work undertaken by Amnesty International contributed to change (intended and unintended) and to assess the potential for using geospatial technologies to contribute towards more effective advocacy and impact. The findings of the evaluation will be shared with Amnesty International staff – the IS, sections and partners – in order to promote learning and inform Amnesty International's working practices in the future.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted between October 2010 and April 2011 and primarily looked at achievements and project activities delivered between January 2008 and March 2011. The evaluation methodology included the following steps:

- Terms of Reference were developed with full details on the scope, purpose and methodology of the evaluation.
- The project's theory of change was constructed, enabling the evaluators and the SHR team to establish signs of success and draw up the evaluation framework. The project's theory of change was based on Amnesty International's broader theory of change known as the Dimensions of Change.
- In conjunction with the SHR team, the project stakeholders were identified. Thirty-one in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed to identify emergent themes. A documentation review provided complementary information and covered progress and monitoring reports, media analysis and relevant material posted on the Amnesty International USA and IS websites.
- The evaluators compiled all outputs and media coverage generated during the project.

MAIN FINDINGS – WHAT THE PROJECT ACHIEVED

Fifteen 'pilot' projects across multiple geographies and key crisis areas were initiated during the three years of the

project. These included South Ossetia/Georgia, Chad, Darfur, Eritrea, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, and Nigeria. The SHR team examined the potential efficacy of dozens of projects, some of which were rejected as they did not fit the criteria of the grant award (civil and political rights, mass violence, forced displacement and secret detentions). Other reasons for potential projects being rejected included technical or methodological challenges, poor value for money or lack of interest by relevant stakeholders in Amnesty International or AAAS.

The evaluators found that the project has indeed made progress in achieving intended outputs and results in relation to targets and indicators presented in the theory of change. Many of the original objectives have been achieved and the pilot projects have prompted change.

- The project was successful in delivering evidence of human rights violations, contributing to calls for accountability and promoting activism. Some projects were more successful than others, with the greatest impact achieved in the Darfur, Chad, and Sri Lanka projects. The Chad project in particular was a success in contributing to the cessation of the forced evictions and clearances.

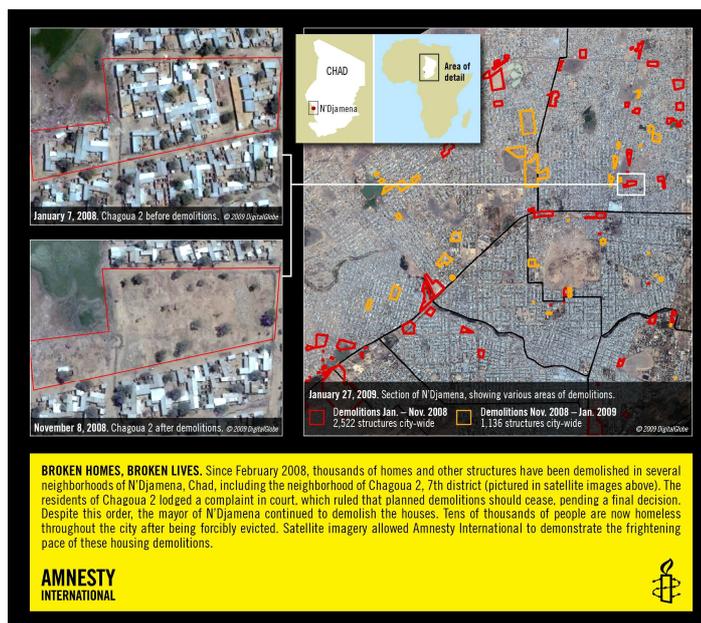


Illustration of outputs from SHR Chad pilot project

- The human rights abuses captured through the technology covered: mass violence and forced displacement (either as a result of conflict or slum clearance) in Darfur, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, South Ossetia, Pakistan and Somalia; forced evictions in Chad, Egypt and Nigeria. The technology was also instrumental in identifying potential (as yet unconfirmed) secret detention sites in Eritrea.

- One of the clear benefits of the technologies is the ability to collect information on areas or regions where Amnesty International has difficulty gaining access. The tools increased monitoring capacity, both reach and access, enabling the quantification of the destruction of civilian infrastructure, the documentation of the direct targeting of civilians and identification of weapons and perpetrators of human rights abuses, and the identification of official or unofficial graves.

- The tools provided powerful, insightful, self-explanatory evidence of human rights violations. They also supported Amnesty International's lobbying, activism, campaigning and advocacy work, especially through the creation of visual imagery. Interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that images and information from geospatial technologies are a very powerful means of communication and that they can add real value to Amnesty International's work. In general, there was consensus that the advantages of using geospatial technologies and imagery are greater than their drawbacks.

- The tools served to secure evidence to help achieve international justice by: generating timelines of events to establish legal responsibility and demonstrate types of damage to civilian infrastructure; providing evidence that contested official data; being rapidly deployable, making them highly valuable.

- Employing geospatial tools contributed to maintaining Amnesty International's reputation and credibility, and helped to show that Amnesty International is indeed at the forefront of human rights monitoring and reporting — a positive unintended result.

- The project also sought to embed a culture of using science to contribute to human rights change amongst staff, especially at the IS. Training was delivered to IS staff by the SHR team as one vehicle to promote the use and understanding of the technologies. The SHR program sought to equip advocates and researchers — both internal and external to Amnesty International — with skills, knowledge and technology that would provide added value to the cause of human rights. The evaluation found that in the IS's Africa and Europe and Central Asia programmes there is a greater understanding of the technologies and the expertise that lies in the SHR team in Amnesty

International USA. However, the technologies have not yet become embedded in the “toolkit” of Amnesty International.

- The partnership between Amnesty International USA and the IS was productive and effective, but the evaluation found it could be strengthened in the future by applying the recommendations outlined below. On the whole, both parties were very positive about the experience, and the key success factors identified by the IS and Amnesty International USA respondents were the helpfulness and enthusiasm of the SHR team. Tensions between IS staff and the SHR did arise in a few incidences regarding the quality of the imagery or the presentation of the issue. Clearly a better system of approvals needs to be established whereby the IS (the “human rights experts”) is given the opportunity to comment and amend narratives that accompany the imagery. The system should also work within clearly agreed timelines with final approval mutually agreed before the project commences.

- The evaluators found that project management could have been improved. There was often a lack of clarity on the project goals, and a lack of shared responsibility for monitoring between Amnesty International USA SHR team and the IS staff. By establishing a clear monitoring framework at the outset and identifying respective roles and responsibilities of both the Amnesty International USA team and IS staff, better support for the collection of monitoring data and more effective evaluation of progress and change could have been achieved.

CONTRIBUTING TO HUMAN RIGHTS CHANGE

The evaluation reveals that these technologies clearly progressed Amnesty International’s journey to impact. However it should be noted that geospatial tools or methods were not used in isolation; each project or campaign utilised a number of tools and techniques including geospatial tools. This made it challenging to isolate the contribution made by the technology alone.

CHANGES IN PEOPLE’S LIVES

GIS technology, along with mobilization, media pressure and lobbying by Amnesty International (along with other organizations) helped to bring freedom of movement for approximately 300,000 civilians previously held in internally displaced peoples (IDP) camps in **Sri Lanka**. In **Chad**, the SHR and IS staff considered that the project and efforts by local communities were instrumental in helping to prevent forced evictions in an area of the city that had previously been threatened with clearance.

CHANGES IN ACCOUNTABILITY

Advocacy and lobbying were essential components in all of the projects, and the geospatial tools contributed to varying degrees:

- Analysis from the Sri Lanka project was used in the US State Department’s report on war crimes in that country and distributed to other NGOs. Media sources subsequently cited US State Department pressure as a catalyst to Sri Lankan government action.
- A report on the Georgian conflict was presented at the Council of the European Union, where investigators noted satellite image analysis several times and referred to SHR materials.
- IS and Amnesty International USA staff used satellite imagery analysis to engage in direct lobbying with several US government agencies.
- Respondents felt the imagery could have helped in their advocacy efforts, but not all respondents felt that the imagery and products of the geospatial tools enabled greater **access** to policy makers.

The project also aimed to tackle a culture of **impunity**, with concealment and denial of human rights no longer an option to evade justice. It was found that:

- Very few staff involved in the pilot projects at the IS felt that the project alone could make such a strong claim, however in the case of Sri Lanka it was felt that the whole scope of Amnesty’s work did contribute to calls for accountability. Some stakeholders felt that in the case of Kyrgyzstan the geospatial tools helped to hold people to account.
- Most respondents felt that the imagery or evidence shown in maps could not act as a deterrent but did feel the evidence played a role in calling for and ensuring accountability, especially in the case of Sri Lanka.

The evaluation looked at whether the project heightened the visibility of violations and increased calls for change. The assessment revealed mixed opinions as to whether geospatial imagery and products produced by the projects helped to generate media and promoted more coverage of the issues. The images were able to tell a story which conveyed the issues with immediacy and in a simple form. Some of the participants felt that the images helped to garner media attention and coverage:

- In the case of Amnesty International UK, the products generated in the Sri Lanka project were invaluable in securing media attention. The section reported that they had been trying to get the UK media's attention on the issue but had had very little success; they viewed the satellite imagery as key to securing interest.
- In the US there was significant media coverage. Several media outlets in the US and internationally reported on the Amnesty International USA/AAAS project. A story by Reuters on the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict was featured in a major *New York Times* article as well as on the homepage of a leading information portal on humanitarian and human rights crisis.
- In Chad, a staff member commented that the press release launch was based on the fact that they had the images and used them as a "hook" to interest the media.

CHANGES IN ACTIVISM AND MOBILIZATION

Assessing the impact on activism resulting from these projects proved challenging, as data for the number of actions taken either online or within the sections was limited. Very few staff interviewed at the IS were able to report on the campaigning or activism that took place as a direct result of the project, and very few sections, if any, reported back on their uptake of the issue or any resultant activism. However, the SHR team was quite efficient in monitoring actions taken, especially those from the Amnesty International USA section:

- The Chad online action was signed by more than 30,000 people.
- For Sri Lanka, more than 70,000 signatures for Amnesty International's campaign on displacement and accountability for violations of international law were collected. The SHR program supported the *Global Unlock the Camps* action on Sri Lanka by collecting more than 35,000 online signatures (out of 40,000 signatures collected globally by Amnesty International). Additionally, the SHR program provided significant support to collect over 50,000 signatures for a global petition to call on the United Nations to establish an international inquiry.
- For Pakistan, three online actions were made available on the Eyes on Pakistan website, one of a number of specialized sub-sites set up for the project. Amnesty International USA used geospatial information to mobilize its activists to call on the US government to ensure better civilian protection in northwest Pakistan. The response rate was above average: 13,000 people signed the online petition.

The assessment therefore concludes that GIS technologies have a good potential to inspire activism and campaigning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SELECTION OF PROJECTS/ISSUES/COUNTRIES AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECTS

- **Select projects more strategically:** consider the sustainability of projects and achieving better human rights impact by focusing on fewer projects selected for strategic potential. The merit and impact created through the use of geospatial tools relative to other options in Amnesty International projects should be thoroughly assessed to ensure an effective use of resources.
- **Embed GIS tools into media and campaigns strategies:** staff should use imagery as part of a broader media strategy. Involvement at the strategic planning phase of major campaigns would also be beneficial to ensure effectiveness. Amnesty International needs to be more strategic in the choice of images and frequency of use. It must ensure that images are chosen and published strategically in order to garner media interest.
- **Complement Amnesty International's traditional methods:** the application of geospatial tools should follow a careful assessment as to the purpose and validity of the evidence generated. In all but exceptional cases the tools should be complemented with traditional Amnesty International research verified from the ground, with a clear understanding that the technology is used to enhance the reputation that Amnesty International already has for issuing accurate and verified information.
- **Align to the planning cycle:** the SHR team should be more involved at the planning stage of project initiation and development. They should be made aware of and participate in timelines for operational planning. The SHR and IS need to consider the priorities set for the movement as a whole. For example, they should refer to the list of priority countries and the Global Priorities Statement when assessing potential projects. Ideally the pilot projects would contribute to the delivery of those priorities.

- **Use participatory planning:** the SHR team should apply participatory planning techniques promoting the full input of the IS (or the equivalent Amnesty International USA team) and where relevant the partners or individuals the project seeks to work with and for.
- **Standardize pilot project request forms:** the SHR team need to implement a standardized project request form that outlines objectives, tasks, timelines and expected measurable outcomes.
- **Develop a guideline and policy position on crowdsourcing:** Amnesty International needs to develop a guideline on the use of crowdsourced information to collect research or in campaigning and mobilization activities. The guideline needs to carefully consider the ethical responsibilities of Amnesty International, the expectations that would be generated and the validity of the research information collected.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT, COMMUNICATIONS AND PARTNER WORKING

- **Steering Committee:** clear terms of reference need to be established and implemented for the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee needs to provide a clear strategic direction on the selection of projects and needs to be brought in as a negotiating and decision making body when disagreement arises in any of the pilot projects.
- **Memorandum of Understanding:** the MOU needs to be shared with all staff involved in pilot project, plus it may be worthwhile to establish Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for each project or piece of consultancy that the SHR team takes on. The SLA would clearly communicate expectations of both parties, make clear roles and responsibilities, approvals agreements and timelines.
- **Communication:** good practice of regular updates to the steering committee should continue. The SHR team needs to continue clearly explaining how long the process can take, the time and inputs that would be expected from the project teams.
- **Approvals on text and outputs:** the use of SLAs would help to set out the process for approving and negotiating on presentation of findings. Agreeing in advance who has final approval is paramount.
- **Project management:** the SHR team should try to ensure that there is a lead person for each project adopting an account management style of operating. This would help to ensure consistency and avoid the confusion of multiple communication channels.
- **Knowledge management:** the SHR team needs to ensure that a knowledge management system is established and consistently applied, ensuring that full documentation of the process, communications, outputs and monitoring is in place.

ENGAGEMENT, SUPPORT AND TRAINING TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

- **Engagement of senior staff:** it is crucial to engage not only the researchers and campaigners in these tools but to also raise the awareness of more senior members of Amnesty International.
- **Training and capacity building:** adequate resources should be made available to expand training to the IS and sections. The production of a "Guide to geospatial technology" outlining the tools, how can they be used, applications in Amnesty International and future opportunities would be a great asset. It may be beneficial to work with the Research Methods Unit at the IS to try to embed these tools into the research methodology course currently delivered to IS staff. The IS needs to invest in more training in quantitative methods.

ACCOUNTABILITY, LEARNING, IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- **Monitoring and learning:** each of the pilot projects should be run as mini-projects adhering to the Amnesty International organizational project cycle. By establishing a clear monitoring framework at the outset and identifying respective roles and responsibilities, staff will encourage and support the collection of monitoring data and the ability to evaluate progress and change.
- **Knowledge diffusion:** the SHR team should continue the great work they have done in advocating the technologies to the external world. They should continue to deliver presentations at academic and professional conferences and publish papers.
- **Incorporating lessons learned into new projects:** the SHR team should continue their practice of reflecting back on lessons learned, both in terms of the technology but also for partnership working, when planning and initiating future projects.
- **Disseminating this evaluation:** a synthesis of the evaluation should be made available to the movement to promote learning and discussion.
- **Centre of expertise:** Amnesty International USA should consider recommending that the SHR team is recognized formally by the Global Management Team as a centre of expertise. This would help to secure the necessary resources and gravitas and promote the use of geospatial technologies throughout the movement.

Pilot projects delivered in the Science for Human Rights Project

● Satellite imagery & research
 ● Satellite plus interactive map
 ● Project underway
 ● Incomplete or test project

