



HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECTS:

**Guidelines for
Scientists and
Human Rights
Organizations**

Contributors

Amanda Sozer, Ph.D.
President
SNA International

Stefan Schmitt, M.S.
Director - International Forensic Program
Physicians for Human Rights

Jessica Wyndham, L.L.M.
Associate Director - Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
American Association for the Advancement of Science

Anne Alexander, Ph.D.
Director - International Programs
University of Wyoming

Arbie Goings, A.A.S
Director - Mass Fatality Response Planning
SNA International

Mark Logsdon, M.S.
President
Geochimica, Inc.

Jennifer Makrides, M.A.
Program Associate
American Association for the Advancement of Science

Brendan Sozer, B.A.
Project Support
SNA International

Patricia Van Arnum
Executive Editor
Pharmaceutical Technology

Nicole Inacio Vanacek, B.S.
Forensic DNA Scientist
SNA International

Preface

A group of collaborating scientists and representatives of human right organizations prepared these guidelines as part of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition's Working Group on Service to the Human Rights Community. The guidelines are intended to facilitate and promote cooperation between scientists and human rights organizations seeking technical expertise and to provide guidance and recommendations of relevance to both parties. These guidelines address some key considerations that will promote greater involvement of scientists with human rights work and foster strong working relationships. The following is based on the experience of the authors and, although not comprehensive, is intended to serve as a guide for establishing science and human rights partnerships.

By providing truth and objective evidence, scientists can make valuable contributions to human rights projects. We support the role of science in human rights projects and hope that these guidelines will help provide enriching and rewarding experiences both for the human rights organizations and the scientists offering their services.

In drafting the guidelines, there was a great deal of discussion as to which term should be used to describe technical and subject matter experts. Ultimately the term "scientist" was chosen mainly for its simplicity. For a detailed explanation of the use of the term "scientist," please refer to Section 1.2 "Who is a Scientist?"

We appreciate the work and contributions of the authors and the thoughtful input from numerous reviewers. Readers are encouraged to submit constructive comments to the AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program by e-mail: srhrl@aaas.org or phone: (202) 326-6796.

*Amanda Sozer, Ph.D.
Stefan Schmitt, M.S.
Jessica Wyndham, LL.M*

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Guidelines

The goal of these guidelines is to promote and support a mutually beneficial relationship between scientists and human rights organizations (HRO). Recognizing the unique role scientists can play in defending human rights, these guidelines provide a framework for managing expectations and facilitating collaboration between scientists and human rights organizations. Drawing on the prior experiences of collaborating scientists and human rights organizations, this document sets out steps for building a strong working relationship and managing the expectations of both parties. Properly planned and executed scientific and technical studies can provide unbiased, substantiated, and reproducible evidence to ascertain the truth through science for a human rights organization.

1.2 Who is a Scientist?

In an effort to keep the terminology of these guidelines simple, “scientist” is used as the comprehensive term for anyone educated and trained in organizing knowledge in the form of testable predictions and explanations about the world. Therefore a scientist can be a technical and subject matter expert in the social, behavioral, physical, and life sciences as well as an expert in the applied sciences and technical fields such as engineering, economics, statistics, medicine, healthcare, and information technology.

1.3 Why Science and Technology?

There has been a growing application of technology as well as scientific knowledge and analysis to human rights questions. Examples range from physical anthropologists analyzing skeletal remains for providing evidence of summary executions, to statisticians evaluating survey data for demonstrating trends in human rights abuses, to engineers providing technical analysis of oil spill reports to help estimate the cost of community health and environmental remediation, to physicians documenting evidence of torture to support asylum claims. Scientific findings can directly impact the documentation and resolution of human rights abuses in the court of public opinion as well as in judicial proceedings. The objective, analytic nature of scientific evidence has not only made it a valuable tool for identifying and documenting human rights violations, but it is also a resource in negotiations and court cases to defend human rights.

1.4 Why Human Rights?

Human rights provide a universal, normative, legal framework that promotes the rights of all human beings to live in dignity. First expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), these are rights that all humans enjoy simply by nature of being human. Among these are the right to free expression, the right to fair trial, the right to the fullest attainable health, the right to education, the right to benefit from scientific progress and many others. By applying their skills and knowledge to human rights questions, scientists are able to contribute to the protection and promotion of the rights of human beings worldwide.

The “International Bill of Human Rights” refers to a group of international legal documents including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the International Covenant of Economic and Social Rights (1966). Among them, these documents lay out the rights to which all human beings are entitled. The Bill operates in conjunction with a series of international, regional and national mechanisms that include human rights commissions, fact finders and courts. Our objective in facilitating communication among scientists and human rights practitioners is to promote greater collaboration in defense of human rights. Scientists and engineers contribute their particular training and human rights practitioners provide a detailed knowledge of human rights law and the international, regional and national mechanisms that can be employed to defend these rights.

2 Role of Scientists in Human Rights Projects

These guidelines address the participation of scientists working in their professional capacity to support human rights projects and examine this participation from all sides – from the human rights organization to the scientist, from the scientist toward the human rights organization and, ultimately, the joint project they undertake. We recognize that many of the scientists who pursue such projects do so because of a personal commitment to human rights, and may have a broad range of experiences and expert opinions relevant to the advocacy goals of a human rights organization. When the partnership relies on the scientist acting in her or his role, we cannot stress enough the importance of providing objective, scientific expertise. This role should be considered distinct from that of a volunteer who happens to be a scientist in day-to-day work but is involved with a human rights project in a non-scientific capacity. Here we focus on the role of scientists when called on for their professional expertise, and the unique contributions and obligations therein.

Human rights are intrinsically associated with, and almost always framed in terms of, legal issues. In the traditions of the Law, it is entirely appropriate for a person to act in an advocacy role. However, in order for scientific conclusions to provide evidentiary functions, the science must be conducted objectively and according to internationally-accepted professional discipline and rule of evidence standards. In undertaking a scientific analysis that will be used to establish legal (forensic) evidence, the scientist must be able to demonstrate that:

- They are working in a scientific field in which they can demonstrate competence.
- Data and/or samples (i.e. evidence) collection has been documented according to the rules of evidence as required by the court.
- Data and/or sample collection takes into account ethical considerations.
- The conclusions flow from the preponderance of reproducible physical evidence.
- The evidence was obtained using methods that are considered reliable in the relevant scientific specialty.
- Data were evaluated in its totality through a logical process that is well-established and generally accepted in that specialty.
- Alternative interpretations were addressed fairly and fully.
- The effects of technical uncertainties on the strength of inferences and conclusions have been considered using standard methods.

The result of this structure is that the scientific work may or may not support the position initially advocated by the human rights organization's legal and advocacy direction. The personal inclinations of the scientist to the underlying problem must be separated from the design and execution of the specialized work, or the entire project could be jeopardized in a later forum. For instance, a study that finds a violation of the right to clean drinking water will have less scientific validity if it were framed with the *intent to find* violations of that right than would a study initiated to investigate *whether* there is indeed a violation at all.

If the prospective scientist is joining the project to offer specialized technical services, then issues of expectations and limitations, as well as the balance of the specialist's expertise with the objectives of the human rights organization, need to be addressed explicitly. It is imperative to continually address these issues from the earliest days of discussion to the final report preparation and finalization.

3 Managing Expectations

Because collaborative projects derive their success from the collaboration between scientists and human rights practitioners, the expectations of the two partners may differ. When leaders of a human rights project approach a scientist, it is critical for both parties to discuss the specific needs, expectations and desired deliverables. The human rights practitioner will need to describe the nature of the project (e.g. advocacy and/or legal goals) and expected deliverables, while the scientist will need to clarify what their expertise can determine, a reasonable timeline and what they require in order to provide the requested inquiry or analysis. The scientist must also make it clear to the project leaders, who presumably are not scientists, what limitations and uncertainties may exist in the study outcomes. Such uncertainties may be the consequence of the inherent limitations of science, or could be a result of other impediments, such as the ability to preserve samples until a detailed analysis at a qualified laboratory is possible. Very early in the process there must be a mutual understanding between the human rights organization and the scientist with respect to expectations and what information the science can potentially provide.

The following sections outline areas of consideration that the scientist and the HRO may want to explore before entering into a relationship. Areas to consider include:

- [Section 3.1 Finding a Partner Scientist or Human Rights Organization \(HRO\)](#)
- [Section 3.2 Professional/Scientific Responsibilities](#)
- [Section 3.3 Developing Project Expectations](#)
- [Section 3.4 Implications for Stakeholders](#)
- [Section 3.5 Use of Project Materials and Findings](#)
- [Section 3.6 Considerations for Working On-site with Human Rights Organizations](#)
- [Section 3.7 Communication Strategies in Advocacy](#)

Each section contains questions both for the scientist and for the HRO. The questions are not comprehensive and are merely designed to guide each party in approaching topics before entering into a relationship. While both parties may have resources to share, the scientist and HRO may find the suggested questions, and resulting answers, helpful in creating a framework for ensuring a mutually beneficial relationship.

For an effective project the scientist and HRO must develop transparency with one another. They both must possess a willingness to communicate ideas and findings, since it is important for both parties to understand the project, provide information and data, and realize the limitations of the science.

3.1 Finding a Partner Scientist or Human Rights Organization (HRO)

It is important for the HRO to find the “right” scientist and for the scientist to find the “right” project. The key to developing a successful project is to identify early on the capacities and limitations of the scientist(s) and HRO involved. This can only be achieved through an open dialog between the scientist, pointing out their limitation and needs, and the HRO, which has a good understanding of the context in which the project will be carried out. The key to a successful relationship is not only identifying the correct scientific discipline that can support the project, but also identifying a scientist/technical expert that can perform the various aspects of the work that are needed. If possible, the HRO may want to consider using several scientists with different skill sets. In addition to open discussions, spending time to develop a written agreement outlining expectations and resource requirements will help foster a good relationship and manage expectations.

3.1.1 Qualifications and References

Understanding credibility is important. Both the HRO and the scientist must undergo an appropriate vetting process. Recommendations from previous partners may be helpful in fully understanding capabilities and experience. Additionally, the scientists should not provide support beyond their area of expertise and should be prepared to explain their limits in supporting a project. The HRO should investigate if special certifications, degrees or authentications of diplomas are required in order for the scientist to be recognized by local authorities. The HRO should also be aware of any past work performed by the scientist that may negatively impact the project.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Is this a credible HRO?
- Will I be working within my area of expertise?
- What are the advocacy goals and interests of the HRO?
- Which organizations can I contact that will provide information on the HRO and the potential project?
- What expectations can I address? Which can't I address?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Is the scientist appropriate for the project?
- Does the scientist have the proper credentials/certifications to support this project?
- What are the scientist's prior experiences in the field of human rights?
- Does the scientist have the specific experience and abilities (interpersonal skills) needed to perform the tasks of the project?
- What are their prior publications like?
- What references can I contact to assess the scientist's suitability for the project?

3.1.2 Contracts and Written Agreements

A written agreement is critical in documenting the expectations of the scientist and HRO. The written agreement is also helpful in making sure that everyone understands his or her role in the project. Many of the considerations highlighted in this document can be integrated into the written agreement. Carefully considered contracts and agreements

outlining expectations between the HRO and scientist will support the effective use of resources.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Can we enter into a written agreement/contract that outlines my responsibilities and those of the HRO?
- What are the important tasks, deliverables and timeframes that should be included in the written agreement/contract?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Can we enter into a written agreement/contract that outlines the HRO's responsibilities and those of the scientist?
- What are the important tasks, deliverables and timeframes that should be included in the written agreement/contract?

3.1.3 Resource Requirements

Resource considerations should include time, travel restrictions, special software, supplies, and equipment. Without proper planning, projects can take considerably longer than originally expected.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Does the project have any budget restrictions that may impact the science or my ability to adequately add value to the project?
- Is the time allotted for the project enough to adequately address the issue at hand?
- Is the host-country's technical capacity sufficient for the necessary scientific analysis?
- What resources (time and money) are needed for any follow-up after the initial work is completed?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What travel, time, equipment or other resource requirements does the scientist have that may impact the project?

Scientists embarking on a project with a HRO should discuss who the HRO has previously consulted, as their work may be relevant to the project. If the HRO is continuing to use other sources, it is important for the scientist to know. When we discovered that the HRO was outsourcing samples from our project, we realized that vital data was lost that may never be recovered. The impact of trying to obtain quicker results cost the project time and money. Tests had to be repeated and results verified. When results are conflicting, trust from the community could be jeopardized.

Nicole Vanecek, SNA International

3.2 Professional/Scientific Responsibilities

Just because the scientist is volunteering their time does not eliminate them from adhering to professional responsibilities and applicable laws and regulations. It is better to identify and address potential constraints before entering into a relationship with the HRO. It is much easier to plan appropriately than to have to deal with the consequences after a requirement or responsibility was overlooked.

3.2.1 Conflicts of Interest

Human rights projects can swiftly move into the media and be heavily scrutinized. A seemingly small project can quickly balloon into a media attraction. It is important that the scientist notifies their employer/institution of their potential involvement in the project, receives approval, and works within the terms of their employment.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What type of Conflict of Interest Policy does my institution have?
- What type of conflict of interest might I have in working with this HRO?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What type of work has the scientist done in the past that may cause them to have a conflict of interest?
- Has the scientist received approval from their employer to work on the project?

3.2.2 Insurance

If a scientist volunteers his or her time to a human rights project, they may not be covered under their current employer's insurance (professional liability, disability, workers compensation, life, and/or health). Before beginning work, it is important to understand the requirements, coverage, and how the scientist and HRO will be protected from unanticipated repercussions during the study.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Does my current professional liability insurance cover me for this work?
- Do I need any special coverage to work on this project?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Will I need to provide professional liability insurance for the scientist?

3.2.3 Institutional Review Board (IRB) Requirements

It is important to protect the rights and welfare of the research/project subjects. However, because of cultural and language barriers, the scientist may find it difficult to follow the requirements of committees (such as IRBs) that are formally designated to approve, monitor, and review biomedical and/or behavioral studies involving humans. It is important for the scientist to anticipate that the IRB process may not play out "as expected" on the ground, especially in cases where consent is acquired via a third party (e.g. HRO). If needed, contingency plans should be developed, approved, and implemented to comply with IRB requirements. If documents are translated into another language, they may require re-review to ensure accordance with IRB requirements. Informed consent and data security will be important to maintain during the study and after it is complete.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Even if the HRO does not need an IRB, do I need to be working under one?
- If an IRB is needed, will the study design approved be effective for the project?
- Are there ethical concerns that arise due to the nature of the context in which the study is conducted (e.g. security, political, and/or cultural concerns for studied populations/witnesses)?
- Are there confidential data that need protection?
- Is there a protocol in place to ensure no disclosure of confidential information?
- Who has access to the raw, confidential data?
- How are data files and other information kept secure? Who is responsible for computer security?
- Is there a protocol or plan for the final report to ensure no confidential information is released?
- How will the data results be reviewed to ensure that no confidential information is inadvertently released?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Does the requested study require an IRB (now or in the future) to have the work conducted and/or published?
- What kind of ethical considerations will need to be taken into account from the HRO's perspective?
- Are there ethical concerns that arise due to the nature of the scientific study?
- What kind of methods does the scientific study require which might compromise the security of witnesses?

The AAAS Geospatial Technologies and Human Rights Project undertook a survey of gas flares in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Inspection and analysis revealed 48 gas flares that were located such that their thermal effects extended into areas of human habitation or agriculture, exposing numerous individual homes year-round to temperatures elevated by up to 12°C above normal temperature. In addition to the health, safety, and quality of life issues arising from this situation, peer-reviewed research shows that these higher temperatures are associated with reduced crop yields, potentially in conjunction with other environmental factors such as acidified rain from SO₂ pollution.

3.2.4 Legal/Forensic Aspects

Scientific studies are a way to objectively document and provide evidence of human rights violations. However, there is a difference between academic research science and studies that are conducted with the objective to submit scientific evidence into a court of law (forensic evidence). The need to address this distinction has to be made before a project is launched.

The collection of forensic evidence generally is subject to rules of evidence, such as requiring a judicial mandate (e.g. court order), certain methods for documenting evidence collection (chain of custody), and often times is subject to confidentiality (i.e. it cannot be used in public until a court has released the evidence).

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Is there a legal/forensic aspect to the study?
- Will the results of the scientific be used for advocacy purposes only?
- Which aspects of an advocacy campaign might impact any future use of the scientific results in a court of law?
- Under which type of rules of evidence for a court of law would the study fall?
- How can I conduct the study in such a way that the results may be used in a court of law in the future?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What are the immediate advocacy goals and possible long term legal objectives?
- What rules of evidence and judicial mandate issues need to be discussed with the scientist?
- What are the possible limitations that will be imposed on scientists because of judicial requirements, if any?
- What are the possible long term judicial objectives (e.g. using the evidence in a court of law in different jurisdictions)?

3.3 Developing Project Expectations

Both the Scientist and the HRO will have expectations for the project. Expectations can range from time commitments to the ability to publish data collected during the study. For the success of the project, both the scientist and the HRO must define their respective expectations and come to a mutual agreement.

3.3.1 Scientist vs. Advocate

The scientist needs to understand the importance in being “true to the science” rather than an advocate of a certain outcome. Just because the scientist is a volunteer does not mean that he or she is exempt from conducting and reporting quality research. The data required to properly conduct the study must be available and accessible to the scientist, as should the scientist’s work, in a form that can be independently verified and validated. The HRO’s requests of the scientist must be realistic and feasible within the economic, political, cultural, and time constraints of the project. Both the HRO and the scientist should be prepared to move forward appropriately if and when the science does not support the HRO’s desired outcome.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Have I clearly communicated to the HRO that I will be impartial and that the data may not be consistent with HRO’s intended or desired outcomes?
- In order to conduct an independent study, what aspects might exist that go beyond the HRO’s intended goals (e.g. include communities/populations/sampling initially not considered by the HRO, but necessary for a comprehensive study)?
- Will I be able to scientifically defend my studies and results?
- In which forum/against whom will I have to scientifically defend my studies and results?
- Should I have the work independently peer-reviewed?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Will the scientist be impartial and independent?
- How will our operational approach (participation, consultation, and decision-making) impact the research methodology?
- How will the scientist handle the data if findings are not consistent with what we are expecting?
- Where/how will the scientist have to defend the scientific study?
- What are the anticipated criticisms and objections of the scientific study?

3.3.2 Project Plan

The scientist should be informed about all aspects of the project plan and kept constantly informed with regard to all management decisions as the project moves forward. The scientist should explain to the HRO what his or her standard procedures are for conducting research. This should include the proposed procedures for verifying assumptions, data, and calculations, as well as detecting and correcting errors. It is important to clearly outline what is required to maintain the level of quality necessary to issuing a report with independent/peer verification of data and results. If working in a community that speaks another language (e.g. immigrant, foreign), independent translations or back-translations (i.e. translations that are made back to the originating language without reference to the

original document) may be needed and factored into cost and time considerations. Additionally, the scientist should be prepared to deal with data and results that conflict with previous /future studies as well as the effect of the work product on the community.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What resources will be available to ensure the integrity of the science and results?
- What is the project plan?
- How long does the HRO expect the project to take? Is their assessment realistic?
- How will the results be used by the HRO?
- Have or will other scientists be working on the project?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What resources are available to allow the scientist to complete the project in a scientifically accurate manner?
- Does the scientist understand their role in the project?
- How long will the project realistically take?

An epidemiologist was approached by the Washington DC Prisoners' Legal Services Project to work with investigating the health consequences of interruptions and delays among incarcerated women, focusing in particular on treatment access for infectious, chronic, and mental health conditions among the women inmates.

3.3.3 Scope of Project

Due to their well-intentioned desire to save money, provide a positive impact to society, and/or receive results quickly, the HRO may unintentionally request the scientist to “cut corners” or go beyond their established area of expertise. It is the responsibility of the scientist to maintain scientific integrity and ensure accuracy of the results by working within their area of expertise, using controls, having an appropriate data set and appropriately reviewing data prior to release.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What is the scope of the project? How does my work fit into the entire project?
- What will be the impact of my work on the local community/ stakeholders?
- Does the project have a legal (forensic) dimension?
- What are my legal obligations and responsibilities if I work on this project?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Will the scientific study be able to address the issue at hand?
- What are the potential outcomes?
- Based on the potential outcomes should the project be conducted?
- What are the scientific considerations that might impact the scope of the project?

3.3.4 Level of Commitment

Deadlines should be addressed and take into consideration which aspects of the project will take longer in other locations. Some projects may not have a firm end-date, as data collection may be continuous or new data may be uncovered after the initial conclusions/recommendations have been made. There may be a need or a desire for the scientist to re-engage in the project to address the new data.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Do I have the time to complete this project to a satisfactory level and within the requested time frame?
- If the deadlines are not met and the time lines are extended, what are my limits in terms of the duration of time over which I can commit to this project?
- What kind of follow-up work might be necessary after completing the work? (e.g. press conferences, court testimony, legal obligations)

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- How flexible is the predicted time line?
- What will happen if the scientist cannot finish the project within the requested time period?
- Is the scientist available for any follow-up work (e.g. answering the media, questions about the data and report)?

3.3.5 Budget

The scientist and HRO cannot embark on a relationship until a comprehensive budget is formulated. At a minimum, the budget should allow for accurate and reproducible studies and documentation. It is also helpful to recognize that flexibility is required in all international work. If the budget is not adequate, discussions should involve the feasibility of moving forward with the project.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Is the budget/funding for the project adequate to conduct studies that add value and provide accurate results?
- What will I be expected to pay out-of-pocket?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Is our budget adequate to support the project? Does the budget include resources to cover what we will need to properly support the scientist/project?
- What costs does the scientist anticipate and have we accounted for them?

3.3.6 Scientific and Technical Equipment and Supplies

The scientist should clearly outline the equipment, software or other tools necessary for completing research. Once the project has ended, the scientist may wish to leave the equipment and supplies with the HRO. If the HRO acquires the equipment, they must be prepared to operate and maintain the equipment properly. Equipment and supplies may include access to reliable phone lines and high-speed internet.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What equipment and supplies will be required?
- Who will arrange for the acquisition of equipment and supplies? Who will bear the cost for transportation, insurance and taxes?
- Who owns the equipment and supplies, and do I have authorization to use them for this project?
- What will be involved if I have to use my own equipment and how will repairs be handled?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Are equipment and supplies required?
- If training is required, who is responsible for training? What happens if the equipment breaks?
- If we purchase equipment, who will own it and be responsible for set-up, validation, and maintenance?

3.3.7 Continued Support and Handover

It should be clearly understood between the HRO and scientist if the project will extend beyond the timeline and if the scientist is expected to continue to give support after the project is done. If it is necessary, the HRO and scientist should consider developing a transition plan to pass along the project after the work is complete.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What is expected of me after I have completed my work on the project? Will there be requests for me to do additional work in the future?
- If I do not have the time to continue to support the project, are there things I can do now to limit my involvement in the future?
- What will I need to do once I am finished? Will I need to hand over my data and work files?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Once this project is complete will I need the scientist again (e.g. will the scientist need to testify to their results)?
- Will it be necessary to involve the scientist in any resulting media campaigns?

3.3.8 Ownership of the Data

The publication of data can be important for the success of the human rights project and can also be a motivation for the scientist. While it is important to agree upon how to use the data, not all uses may be evident before the study begins. An appropriate method should be developed in order to ensure that all data are used in a mutually agreeable way. It is important that data be protected from unauthorized use. In contexts where Human Rights violations occur, the lack of a comprehensive data security solution can potentially have life or death consequences.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Will I have full and unrestricted access to the data for publications and studies now and in the future?
- Who owns any data/samples collected? Can I use it for future publications/studies?
- Is the data going to be secure and not exposed to abuse at present and in the future?
- Are there any legal/forensic considerations which I need to address?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Who has ownership or rights to use the data?
- How will the data be protected from unauthorized use?

3.4 Implications for Stakeholders

The scientist should have a clear vision about the potential impact of the study on himself/herself, the HRO, and the community. It is important that the results of the study are scientifically accurate and formatted in a way that can be understood by the HRO, funding agencies, and the local community.

3.4.1 Communication with Research Subjects and Stakeholders

The scientist should be aware and prepared if the work requires interaction with research subjects, the community, and/or local government. An agreement regarding the release of study information should be reached. If appropriate, the scientist should be given the opportunity to verify all work translated into another language. The scientist and the HRO may find it helpful to develop a terminology list for the translators before any translations begin.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Will I be asked to communicate with the research subjects and stakeholders? If so, in what format will I be communicating?
- How do I ensure that the provided scientific information is accurately portrayed to the stakeholders in an understandable way?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Does the scientist need to communicate with the research subjects and stakeholders? What will the limitations be in such communications?
- Are there particular types of data collection that are necessary for the scientist that might be impacted by the context in the field? (e.g. lack of electricity, cooling facilities)

3.4.2 Effects of Work on the Community

The scientist's results (e.g. project, report) may create issues after the departure of the scientist. Both the HRO and the scientist should be prepared for the community's reaction to the work by anticipating and developing strategies for any possible issues that may arise.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What if the study significantly impacts the community? How will the HRO work with me to communicate the results in a constructive way?
- What are my ethical responsibilities?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What effects will this work have on the host community?
- Will there be any security issues for the community as a result of the scientific study?

3.4.3 Effects of Work on the Scientist

The scientist should be prepared for a possible reaction from the scientific community. In the event of informed criticism, the scientist and/or HRO should be given the opportunity to defend and/or explain the work.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What effects might this work have on my professional reputation?
- What resources (e.g. translation services) will I need to address any scientific criticism?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Will the scientists be able to justify their work on this project?
- What kind of existing professional support/backing does the scientist have?

3.4.4 Data Collection and Documentation

Before beginning a project, it is important to consider any factors that could determine how information is recorded, stored, shared, and reproduced. This may include what is culturally permissible and/or legally acceptable to document. The HRO and scientist should discuss if the study will cause problems within the community, with local law enforcement, if certain forms of documentation may be better than others, and/or if permission is required to collect data.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- How will I be able to collect information and maintain documentation in a manner that allows another scientist to thoroughly evaluate my work?
- To what level of scrutiny might my study be subjected?
- Are there any particular judicial concerns I need to take into account? (e.g. some judicial systems rely exclusively on written accounts and no 'cross-examination' of witnesses takes place)

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- How will the scientist document their finding(s)?
- How will I use and understand such findings?
- What types of data will be collected and how will they be documented and stored?
- What type of infrastructure will be necessary to document and store the data?
- What kind of data security do the collected data/samples require?

In many cultural settings a "Doctor" is taken to also be a medical doctor. When drawing blood for a population based health study, some villagers were under the impression that our scientific team had arrived to provide individual health care. The communication to the population by the partner HRO hadn't been done with enough thoroughness, which resulted in local disappointment even though an IRB with an information campaign had been prepared by the scientific team for the HRO. Situations like this can easily get out of control, endangering the project and peoples' lives.

Stefan Schmitt, Physicians for Human Rights

3.5 Use of Project Materials and Findings

In addition to helping others, the scientist may have a desire to publish project materials/findings. It is important that both parties have a clear understanding of how findings will be used by both the scientist and the HRO. Many times, academic publications can help provide support to the scientific findings and are welcomed by HRO's.

3.5.1 Privacy and Confidentiality

Due to the human rights nature of the work, there may be concerns in addition to IRB requirements (e.g. access to the data, how data may be reproduced and identified). It is important to identify these concerns before the project commences.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- How will I be able to use the data while maintaining privacy and confidentiality requirements?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- How will privacy and confidentiality be maintained throughout the project and during any future use of the data?

3.5.2 Publication and Reports

An important question that needs to be answered is "What are the expectations/policies of the HRO and the scientist with regard to final deliverables and publications?" Understanding this before the work begins may save considerable time and resources. During the editing process, information may be inadvertently changed. To avoid such changes, if the scientist's work is being cited or used, he or she should have a say in the release of the data.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What will be the process for reviewing and verifying the data and results?
- What will be the format of the final deliverables? Will the scientist prepare a separate document under his or her name which provides the results or will the results be incorporated into the human rights organization's document? If the latter, how will the scientist's research and findings be cited?
- How do I maintain scientific integrity of the data and results?
- Will I have ownership over certain aspects of the final document (e.g. the wording of the scientific conclusions)?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- How will the findings be published?
- Who will perform the formatting, review, and publication?
- What kind of scientific review does the scientist recommend?

3.5.3 Translations

Scientific terms are not always easy to accurately translate. Despite the fact that many modern scientific terms are similar in sound and spelling across multiple languages, their definitions and usages may be different. Some languages may also have scientific terms that are unique to that particular language despite the availability of more universally

understood terms. It is also important to note that some languages may not have words for terms and ideas all together.

There is a need to ensure that translations work in both directions and that the meanings of terms and ideas do not get altered or lost in the translation. This is especially important to take into consideration if something needs to be translated into a local language and then converted back into its original language.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- If applicable, how will I know that data will be properly translated?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- How will we ensure the accuracy of translations?

3.5.4 Interaction with the Media

HRO projects can become emotionally charged, especially with distraught victims and family members that are seeking something substantial to come out of the project. In this case, the media can be a powerful player in the dissemination of information to the public. It can also create difficulty for the project and its results if the scientist or the HRO is not careful. Any interaction with the media should be carefully controlled and a confidentiality agreement should be in place before the start of the project to protect both the data and the integrity of the scientist(s) work. Any information uncovered and provided in conjunction with the study should be handled similarly and released in an appropriate manner.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What is the HRO's media/outreach campaign plan in reference to the study?
- Who controls interaction with the media? Do I need to refer to a spokesperson from the HRO?
- How does my freedom of interacting with the press curtail my independence?
- How do I get permission to discuss the project publically?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What additional concerns from the scientist need to be taken into account in any HRO media campaign?
- To what degree should the scientist be involved in media relations?
- What is the scientist's prior record of interacting with the media?

I experienced first-hand how important proper translation is when one member of our group stated at a meeting that she was an English major; it was incorrectly translated as she held the rank of major in the English Army. Fortunately, a second translator immediately caught and corrected the mistake before there was any misunderstanding among the meeting participants.

Amanda Sozer, SNA International

3.6 Considerations for Working On-site with Human Rights Organizations

Work on-site may bring up issues that do not need to be considered when the scientist works in their own office. The scientist should perform due diligence in researching the location where the work will be performed.

Accidents and emergencies can and do happen and potentially pose a serious threat to any project and partnership. In some areas of the world, emergency services might not even exist. A Security Risk Assessment should be carried out prior to any project, as it will limit the impact of any potential emergencies (medical or otherwise) and threats to the organizations and projects involved.

3.6.1 Understanding and Maintaining Cultural Awareness

Cultural differences, no matter how large or small, can impact the study, thus it is important for both the scientist and the HRO to be aware of this before the work is underway. Some of the more common things for the scientist and HRO to take into consideration prior to executing the work are:

- Religious elements in society
- Political considerations and regional politics
- Local culture and customs
- Work/holiday schedules (e.g. typical business hours, when the work-week begins)

It is important for the scientist to become, at the very least, familiar with cultural norms for personal and professional behavior. Certain actions such as food and alcohol consumption, appropriate ways of greeting others, conversation structure, manner of dress, and methods of organizing meetings and negotiations may be different from what the scientist is used to. Similarly, the HRO may need to anticipate the cultural differences of the scientist and prepare accordingly.

There may also be a difference in the facilities where the work is being done and the scientist is staying. Things like toilets, showers, air conditioning, electrical outlets, and sleeping arrangements may be different from what the scientist is used to, or they may not be available at all. It is important that the scientist researches this before they travel so that they are not unprepared. Similarly, the scientist should remember that they are there to work with HRO, not for a personal vacation. As such, they should not expect to have the same comforts as they might at home.

The scientist's actions may also be more closely scrutinized than expected while working on-site due to their presence. Off-hand comments or overheard phone calls can end up being published in the local media, make their way to the local government or damage the project in other ways.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Will regional politics affect work and travel?
- Will any of my previous travel create difficulty if I am entering another country?

The Director of the Crisis Prevention and Response Center at AIUSA teamed up with an AAAS scientist to document human rights violations in Darfur, Sudan. Over the course of six months a geographer secured and analyzed satellite images of villages that were reported to have been destroyed. By compiling and comparing "before" and "after" imagery, the project enabled AIUSA to better communicate the situation in Darfur to the world community, and raise awareness of villages threatened with attack.

- Are there political, religious, or cultural variables that might have an impact on the reporting, such as religious or political affiliation of the scientist (even personal ones), which might impact the credibility of the work in the HRO location?
- Are there any aspects which might impact the editing of the report, such as the use of certain images (e.g. in some US states, autopsy images cannot be used in non-legal settings), wording and phrasing, that in translation might not be interpreted correctly?
- What aspects need to be taken into account when collecting samples (e.g. biological samples which might have a cultural or religious significance in the local population)?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Does the scientist have any affiliations (political, religious, cultural) that might cause any follow-up/media issues for our HRO?
- Are there any legal, cultural, political, historical and/or religious aspects of data and sample collection that might need to be addressed with the scientist before collection commences?
- Has there been discussion of the scientific reporting necessary and how it might impact local settings where such reporting isn't acceptable (e.g. the use of images considered too explicit or culturally unacceptable)?

3.6.2 Communication

Scientists need to know the availability and cost to communicate both locally and back home. Methods of communication that may be available at home may be more expensive or not available at all at the on-site location and it may be necessary for the scientist to bring their own equipment. Access to communication may be critical to project success.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What forms of communication will I have access to (local cell phones and landlines, Skype, internet and international calling, etc)?
- When and how often will I be able to communicate?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What communication needs does the scientist have?

3.6.3 Insurance

Insurance coverage and exclusions can vary around the world. Make sure that the insurance covers the area that the scientist is visiting, taking into account the regional situation, acts of man vs. acts of nature and, if applicable, whether or not it is covered by the organization for which the scientist is working. The scientist should make sure that at a minimum they consider insurance for:

- Health & medical evacuation
- War Risk Insurance (injuries due to act of war), if working in a conflict zone
- Security evacuation
- Life & Repatriation of remains

Ensure that there is access to appropriate medical attention should the need arise and whether car rental/transportation insurance is being covered.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Does my health, life, equipment, etc. insurance cover my needs when working with an HRO?

- Is the area where the study is to take place considered a conflict zone? If so, does my existing insurance cover my needs?
- Do I need to inquire about additional in-country insurance and EMS services (e.g. war risk/medical evacuation insurance sometimes only covers cost-reimbursement)?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Does the scientist have medical or financial needs, which they cannot address in the case of an emergency?
- Are there any medical necessities which need to be known/addressed (e.g. diabetes, medication, physical handicaps)?
- Is the level of existing Emergency Medical Services going to cover the scientist's needs?

3.6.4 Security

In areas considered conflict zones, security concerns need to be addressed prior to engaging in a project. For instance, security awareness between local and non-local partners frequently diverges. Security concerns may also differ between the local and non-local partners, so it is important for both parties to communicate what their concerns are to each other. Special considerations particular to each partner will play a role in determining an effective security strategy. The following are points suggested to be taken into account when developing such a security strategy:

- Travel warnings issued by the U.S. Department of State and other foreign ministries
- A Security Risk Assessment (SRA) performed by a reputable firm before traveling, if necessary
- Security Protocols set in place prior to engaging in the project
- Registering foreign travel plans with the U.S. Department of State or Foreign Ministry
- Extra copy(s) of passport, passport photos, credit card information, emergency information and additional pictures

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Where can I get independent information on security assessments related to the project?
- How do other scientists/organizations address emergencies and security concerns when working in a particular local setting?
- As a non-local, what is my "security comfort-level" when it comes to working in a foreign environment?
- What are the security considerations for the particular location in which I will be working? Are there any costs associated with this security and how will they be covered?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What is the likelihood of an emergency (medical or security related) occurring and what impact could it have on the project?
- What liability/responsibility/contingency plans does the HRO have in regards to providing support to the scientist in the event of an emergency?
- What is the scientist's "comfort zone" and perception as to security and what kind of impact will this have on providing support to him/her?

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) recruited a forensic pathologist to travel to Bosnia to participate in the largest forensic investigation of mass graves ever conducted. Overcoming scientific, as well as political and logistical challenges, forensic evidence gathered by the pathologist and other scientists in and around Srebrenica has contributed to arrests and convictions of individuals for war crimes.

- Have any security concerns which might arise as a result of the scientist's work (e.g. witnesses' security, special confidentiality requirements, data security, freedom of movement/access) been identified and explained
- Will the scientist establish their own security protocols/procedures?

3.6.5 Emergency and Contingency Plans

Emergencies can arise very quickly and sometimes without warning. Should an emergency event occur, it is important for both the scientist and HRO to have developed a contingency plans or Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). At a minimum, contingency plans or SOPs should address: emergency and evacuation/extraction plans or procedures (medical or otherwise), a crisis management plan, and an emergency communications strategy.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What kind of support do I need in the event of an emergency?
- What kind of support can I expect from the HRO in the event of an emergency?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What is the level of emergency management necessary for the scientist?
- Is there a crisis management plan (e.g. medical emergency evacuation, extraction plans, what to do/whom to contact in the event of kidnappings, injury, death)?

3.6.6 Transportation of Materials, Equipment and Supplies

Many countries have restrictions as to what can legally be brought into and out of the country; what is legal in one location may be illegal in another. If the scientist is transporting equipment, they may be stopped and questioned by customs. Often a letter from the HRO explaining the reason for the equipment may ease the trip through customs and help prevent any problems from arising. The scientist may be also charged a tax for bringing in certain equipment; this is something that should be checked on before travelling, so that it is not a surprise latter on.

Before transporting equipment and supplies, it is a good idea to check on the availability and cost of supplies locally. If it is not possible or fiscally viable to purchase locally, different methods of transporting the equipment should be investigated. It may be easier to carry the equipment in luggage than ship it.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Should I be aware of any special import regulations?
- Are the materials that are being sent illegal in the project/host country (even if they are completely legal to use and send at home)?
- Does my own country legally allow me to provide the required information/ equipment to the HRO?
- Is it easier to purchase supplies and equipment locally or bring them in?
- What is the best way to transport the equipment, supplies or materials?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What will the scientist be bringing into the country? Will the scientist need any special paperwork or authorization?
- What will the scientist(s) take with them when they leave? Is it legal and are there any special requirements for taking the material?

3.6.7 Health Preparation

Some countries require vaccinations in order to enter. Always check to see what vaccinations are required and what their costs are. Check with your local county or municipal public health office to find out if vaccinations are available immediately or may need to be ordered. CDC announcements are especially helpful in determining potential health risks. If you have already had the required vaccinations, be sure to have the proper documentation.

The scientist should also bring any prescriptions medicines that may be needed while traveling. Some medicines may not be bought or prescribed in-country, or they may just be too difficult to get in-country.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Do I need any special vaccinations or health reports to travel to the county?
- Can I bring enough of my own medicines without having to rely on getting them locally?
- Are there any health alerts that I should be aware of?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Is the scientist aware of the local health issues, rules and regulations?

3.6.8 Perception of Outside Volunteers by the Local Community

Often the commitment of the scientists to human rights is an endeavor that is carried out as a volunteer. The volunteer environment is a byproduct of the cultural and social environment and country-specific legislation and/or policies on volunteerism. The perception of volunteers, according to the law or cultural environment, may differ between local and foreign volunteers. If volunteers are going to be used where the scientist is working, it is important to consider the "volunteer environment" of the location beforehand and what kind of volunteers the scientist and HRO will be using. See the UN report *Volunteerism Laws and Policies since 2001* at the following web-address: <http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/pdf/2010/Volunteerism%20laws%20and%20policies%20-%20June%202010.pdf>.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- How are volunteers viewed in the location I will be working? Are there any issues that I should be aware of?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What does the HRO need to tell the scientist regarding how volunteers are perceived by the government and local population?

While in Haiti our team members were acquainted with many of the local customs and traditions. Some were based on religious beliefs and others simply cultural traditions that had been handed down from generation to generation. Understanding and appreciating these issues was important so that no member of our team inadvertently offended any of the locals by any of their actions.

Arbie Goings, SNA International

3.7 Communication Strategies in Advocacy

As illustrated earlier, communication is a vital component to establishing and maintaining a good relationship between the scientist and the HRO. Reporting on a scientific study has different layers of communication, addressing how the results will be released to the public and any stakeholders:

- The scientific report, which has to stand up to peer review and possibly to legal criteria (forensic reporting)
- An executive summary which is edited in such a way that responsibly communicates the scientific results to a lay audience
- A possible additional communications campaign to inform the stakeholders of the study itself (populations affected/sampled, local and international stakeholders, etc.)
- Any follow-up studies or communication that may be necessary

3.7.1 Level of Involvement

Communications on a public level require a comprehensive and pre-planned strategy. Scientific findings need to be explained in terms that are clear, specific, and can be easily understood by the public.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Do I need to review press releases and/or communication with the media?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- What communications support will the scientist need in any media communications?

3.7.2 Goals and Objectives of Communicating the Scientific or Technical Results

The goals and objectives in communicating any scientific or technical results within the HRO's advocacy/legal campaign should be clearly discussed from the on-set of the project/partnership. Sometimes scientific methods require going beyond what an HRO initially intends, such as including a wider geographic area, additional populations and samples, etc., in order to provide scientific credibility to the study.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- Does the nature of the scientific study impact the HRO's communications strategy (e.g. include communities/populations initially not considered by the HRO, but necessary for a comprehensive study)?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- How does the HRO need to design its communications strategy to best convey any scientific results?
- What scientific considerations need to be taken into account for a media campaign/strategy?

3.7.3 Target Audience

A central part of any communications strategy is the target audience, such as the general public, legal community, or political community, and conveying the information to them. Variables, such as language, education level, religious, cultural, and political views of the target audience need to be considered when reporting scientific results within an advocacy campaign by an HRO.

Questions the Scientist Should Consider Asking

- What is the expected target audience for the scientific study and report?
- What type of variables do I need to take into account when communicating the results of the scientific study?
- How might the scientific results impact the HRO's advocacy and communications strategy?

Questions the HRO Should Consider Asking

- Is the scientist capable and willing to communicate on a level other than that of their peers?
- What kinds of support will the scientist need to report their results (e.g. translations/interpretation services)?
- Are there any scientific and resulting ethical considerations that will impact the communications strategy?
- Are there any special considerations in releasing information (e.g. necessary releases/copyright considerations regarding the use of images)?

4 Additional Resources

The information provided in this section is intended to bring awareness and guidance to issues the scientists or HRO may want to discuss before beginning work on a human rights project. A considerable amount of literature has been published on worldwide travel-related issues and volunteerism. It may be helpful to visit some of the web sites listed in this section when preparing to begin work with a scientist or HRO. These resources can answer questions on many of the topics listed above and identify issues and considerations not raised in the guidelines.

Traveling Outside the United States

For those who do not travel internationally regularly, travel preparations can become overwhelming. The following web sites can provide insight on what issues to be aware of when traveling within the US or working abroad.

US Department of State, international travel topics and information:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/aztopics/aztopics_4187.html

US Department of State, tips for traveling abroad:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html

USA.gov, Travel and Working Abroad:

http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Americans_Abroad.shtml

US Department of Homeland Security:

<http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/>

US Department of State, visa information:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html

Health, Safety and Security

Health, safety and security issues are often a significant concern for scientists working away from home. Staying informed is one important way of being prepared. The following web sites provide information on special insurance coverage, basic safety tips for traveling, and information on protecting and maintaining your health while you travel.

Health, Safety, and Insurance for travel and working abroad:

<http://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/living/resources/healthandsafety.shtml>

Escape Artist.com, Insurance and Travel Safety:

http://escapeartist.com/Expatriate_Insurance/

US Department of State, safety tips traveling abroad:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1180.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Traveler's Health and Safety:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.htm>

World Health Organization, International Travel and Health:
<http://www.who.int/ith/en/>

Cultural Awareness

Whether working in another city away from home or traveling half way around the world, being culturally aware is a critical aspect of developing a good working relationship with the HRO and the community it serves. The following website will provide information on some important cultural considerations when working with the HRO.

State Department Country Pages:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_4965.html

Worldwide Volunteerism

The impact of professionals working across the globe has been studied to understand what contributions have been made and how they have changed policies and impacted communities. The organizations following human rights throughout the world assess ongoing volunteer projects and report on their status and the professionalism of those who have been involved. The following web sites are included to provide examples of organizations involved with global volunteer efforts and what volunteering can entail.

United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Program:
http://unvolunteers.org/infobase/facts/fshuman_rights.htm

United Nations Development Program:
<http://www.undp.org/>

Human Relief Organization:
<http://humanrelief.net/home-page/partners-and-programs/national-commission-for-human-development>

World Volunteer Web:
<http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/news-views/viewpoints/doc/democracy-and-volunteerism-a.html>

Amnesty International Volunteer Leadership:
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/employment/volunteers/page.do?id=1121002>

Additional References

The following may be helpful for scientists who decide to engage in human rights work.

The Right Toolkit - Applying Research Methods to Human Rights:
http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/HRC/Publications_The-Right-Toolkit_04-2012.pdf

Best Practices for Building Capacity in Developing or Post-Conflict Countries:
http://inprol.org/sites/default/files/publications/2012/rm_criminal_investigations_final.pdf