

AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition
Planning Meeting IV
March 3, 2008
Washington, DC

Meeting Report

Meeting Objectives

Clinton Anderson (*American Psychological Association*)

Clinton began by noting that at the last meeting, participants agreed to a statement of mission and goals, and five key areas of activity. Committees were formed to draft planning documents for each area of activity. The committees were asked to draft a rationale, to recommend relevant objectives, and to identify activities and resources needed to meet the objectives. The planning documents for three of the areas of activity were presented for consideration at the meeting. These documents addressed the following areas: Welfare of Scientists, Science Ethics and Human Rights, and Service to the Human Rights Community.

Clinton explained that these documents were prepared: (1) to get us started in the work of the Coalition and to demonstrate progress in the period between now and the Coalition's official launch later this year (or early in 2009); and (2) to present to participants at the launch as an explanation of the Coalition's intended areas of activity. The documents will also form the basis for presentations to be given by each committee during the launch. These presentations will be aimed at eliciting interest in each area and facilitating the formation of working groups to carry out the activities moving forward (2009-2011).

The main purpose of the planning meeting, Clinton explained, was to provide feedback and suggestions on each of the three documents presented for review and to identify best ways to move forward, including actionable sets of recommendations and an initial plan of action for implementing some portion of the work ahead of the launch. When reviewing each document, Clinton suggested that the following issues be considered: tone (appropriate, appealing, etc.), clarity, logic, specificity (enough/too much). Clinton also emphasized that the content of the documents needed to be broad enough not to preclude additional content/ideas within the area of activity, yet specific enough to provide guidance for next steps.

Area of Activity I: Welfare of Scientists

Michele Irwin (*American Physical Society*) and Sinead O'Gorman (*Scholars at Risk Network*)

Michele introduced the draft document that she and Sinead prepared on the Welfare of Scientists. Participants provided comments on the document (revised version attached). Next steps to be accomplished within the coming six months were also agreed to as set out below.

Substantive Comments and Suggestions:

- The tone of the rationale section needs to be written so it is less “pleading” and more affirmative;
- The rationale section should not mention specific scientific societies or organizations by name; mentioning AAAS or the Union of Concerned Scientists may inadvertently reduce the responsibility and sense of ownership that should be shared among all coalition members;
- In order not to prematurely close off the possibility of responding to unusual and difficult cases, the rationale statement should retain a broadly defined mandate on defending the human rights of scientists. The mandate should not single out any one right or suggest that violations will only be addressed if they fall within a specific criteria (i.e., only relevant if they relate to a scientist’s research);
- Regarding the right to travel, the committee will need to consider not only short-term travel for scientific functions, but threats made towards scientists and their families seeking to immigrate;
- A definition of “scientists” who will be covered will need to be developed. For example, will students and “amateur” scientists be included?
- It was noted that only in the absence of effective domestic legal remedies will the Coalition take on a case, and that this will obviously reduce the number and types of cases to be addressed by the Coalition.

Next Steps:

- Identify the ways that scientists under threat currently come to the attention of scientific associations;
- Inventory the current actions that scientific associations and professional societies undertake on the behalf of scientists under threat. Eventually identify what has worked well and what has not worked;
- Create a webpage on the Coalition website that links to organizations that currently work on scientists in need and are taking some type of action.

Area of Activity II: Science Ethics and Human Rights

Rob Albro (*American Anthropological Association*) and Paula Skedsvold (*American Educational Research Association*)

Rob and Paula introduced the draft document on Science Ethics and Human Rights. Participants provided comments on the document (revised version attached). Next steps to be accomplished within the coming six months were also discussed as set out below.

Substantive Comments and Suggestions:

- The framework, as reflected in the rationale, objectives and content, needs to be broadened to include physical and life scientists;

- Consideration should be given to the implications that science and technology have for humans even without their explicit involvement in research. We need to look at the consequences of science and the value of anticipating the potential problems with new technologies (e.g., land-use decisions changing climate; use of GIS to identify human rights abuses, but people unaware of surveillance);
- When considering the extent to which human rights are embedded in the ethics codes of professional societies, consider what institutional practice reveals about the difference between international and domestic priorities;
- Consider the role and impact of human rights and ethics at all levels and stages of the research and development process. Broaden the conversation to include federal regulators, departments, and funders;
- Consider links to Article 15 particularly with regard to establishing funding priorities based on human rights principles;
- Simplify the objectives and reduce overlap.

Next Steps:

- Work with AAAS to identify the human rights principles reflected in codes of ethics for professional societies and identify exemplars in each of four areas: life, physical, behavioral, social;
- As time permits, identify human rights principles in each area of scientific inquiry that are applicable across the sciences that could form the basis for a “10 things to think about when reviewing your ethics code.”

Area of Activity IV: Service to the Human Rights Community

Susan Hinkins (*American Statistical Society*) and Hormuzd Katki (*Washington Statistical Society*)

Susan introduced the draft document that she and Hormuzd had prepared on Service to the Human Rights Community. Participants provided comments on the document (revised version attached). Next steps to be accomplished within the coming six months were also discussed as set out below.

Substantive Comments and Suggestions:

- A separate document is needed to describe what is meant by “human rights community,” emphasizing the diversity of organizations and the inclusion of human rights-based cases and approaches to questions, rather than simply human rights organizations;
- The rationale should be broadened beyond bringing social science research and methods to human rights. The committee needs to consider how to recruit scientists from all fields (e.g., geography, physics, mathematics), how they can bring their discipline-specific expertise to human rights questions, and how to engage the human rights community to find out their needs;

- The committee will need to facilitate awareness among scientists of their potential relevance to human rights work and create a space for the scientific society to consider how best it can contribute. To this end, a “road show” should be designed and taken to all possible scientific societies and associations’ annual meetings, explaining this area of activity, and the scope and benefits of scientific involvement;
- Explore the relationship between this area of activity and the SHRP “On-Call” scientists project, which is a network of scientists who are prepared as *pro bono* consultants to advise and assist human rights organizations in their work;
- It will be important to explore a range of contributions from each discipline. In the area of geography, for example, remote-sensing is not the only potential contribution of geography to human rights;
- Add “value” section at the end of Area of Activity documents, specifying the value of the activity for: the scientific community, the human rights community, and the Coalition.

Next Steps:

- Identify compelling examples of how science is being used by the human rights community; develop examples of how scientists are contributing to human rights in a form that can be shared at the launch and to serve communication purposes;
- Consider a panel for the launch that brings together three teams of scientists and human rights practitioners that have partnered successfully;
- Consider holding a meeting in advance of the launch with human rights organizations as an initial communication effort to build a bridge between the scientific and human rights communities and introduce them to the Coalition.

Next Steps

- Next planning meeting will be held on **Monday, June 9 from 9:00-12:00 pm**
- Presentations and documents for the next meeting:

Area of Activity III: Service to the Community of Scientific Associations
Molly Brown (*Association of American Geographers*) and Brad Miller
(*American Chemical Society*)

Area of Activity V: Information Materials
Judith Blau (*Sociologists Without Borders*) and Julie Mertus (*International Studies Association*)

Report on international science and human rights organizations
Clinton Anderson (*American Psychological Association*)

Coalition Models (continued)

Rob Albro (*American Anthropological Association*) and Bahram Rajaei
(*American Political Association*)

Membership Statement

Paula Skedsvold (*American Educational Research Association*) and Mona
Younis (*AAAS Science and Human Rights Program*)

Attachment #1: Area of Activity 1: Welfare of Scientists

Attachment #2: Area of Activity 2: Science Ethics and Human Rights

Attachment #3: Area of Activity 4: Service to the Human Rights Community

Area of Activity I: Welfare of Scientists

Rationale

The scientific community is a strong supporter of the human rights of individual scientists. There is a need, however, to expand participation and work in this area, and to improve its effectiveness. By increasing the number of scientific associations involved and coordinating their efforts, the Coalition will help the scientific community to better respond to cases of alleged human rights violations. By improving their advocacy on behalf of scientists, scientific associations and academies contribute to the broader defense of universal human rights.

Objectives

- Protection and defense of the human rights of scientists under threat;
- Enhanced effectiveness of scientific associations in responding to cases of alleged violations of the human rights of scientists; and
- Awareness and appreciation within the scientific community of the importance of acting on behalf of colleagues both at home and abroad.

Content

- Coordinate the variety of ways scientists under threat are identified;
- Create a central repository of cases on the Coalition website, and link to organizations (e.g., Scholars at Risk Network) with lists of threatened, missing, and imprisoned scientists;
- Draft and circulate calls for action on behalf of scientists;
- Identify and disseminate examples of what member organizations have done in individual cases;
- Establish a means by which to respond to extraordinary problems that affect the scientific community, publicize this information, and recommend action, if needed;
- Address problems related to scientists' right to travel, free circulation, and free inquiry to enable all scientists, regardless of nationality, to freely pursue science; and
- Collaborate with committees and organizations in the U.S. and abroad that are devoted to protecting scientists under threat.

Support

- Human: "people-time" to identify, research, and investigate cases
- Material: database (repository) of human rights cases; list-serv; meetings and conference calls as needed

Area of Activity II: Human Rights and Science Ethics

Rationale

The ethical underpinnings of research will be enhanced by raising the visibility of human rights principles as part of the practice of science, in the broadest sense, including but not limited to scientific research. Explicit linking of international human rights principles to science ethics enhances recognition that science and technology have both direct and indirect implications for humans and the world in which we live. Doing so also will serve to promote a common respect for those involved in, or affected by scientific research, regardless of institutional context. If ethics codes guide the work of scientists and help them identify with a profession, more firmly linking these to human rights principles will serve to bridge scientists across professions and geographical boundaries. These efforts will help to emphasize that science is not an exception in the application of human rights principles.

Objectives

- Appreciation by scientists and scientific associations of the relevance of human rights to science ethics;
- Engagement of scientific societies in the promotion of human rights principles in science practice and professional activities; and
- Infusion of human rights principles throughout the human research protection system.

Content

- Assemble and review ethics codes of scientific societies (life, physical, behavioral, and social), highlight those that are exemplars in integrating human rights principles with scientific ethics and practice, and identify those principles that are applicable across the sciences;
- Develop a set of common principles to guide scientists in the conduct of science in a manner consistent with human rights principles;
- Consider how to integrate a human rights framework more fully into the ethics codes of research societies and scientific associations;
- Examine ethical frameworks for conducting human research to identify areas in which human rights principles could improve process or practice (identify what a human rights approach adds to the current framework);
- Encourage IRB processes that are more clearly grounded in a human rights framework; and
- Develop best practices for how to affect IRB reform in human rights terms.

Support

- Financial: minimal resources
- Human: coalition or other volunteers
- Material: periodic meetings

Area of Activity IV: Service to the Human Rights Community

Rationale

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

Objectives

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

Content

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

Support

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