Chapter 4. Additional Monitoring Tools

Effective human rights monitoring uses multiple methods to gather and verify information about human rights violations and abuses. While interviews often form the core of the fact-finding, additional monitoring tools help corroborate, provide context for, or fill in gaps in information obtained through interviews. In some situations, they may even provide information that may not otherwise be obtainable through interviewing.

Advocates can draw upon a variety of tools to complement the information obtained through interviewing, including: (1) gathering information through focus groups and community meetings; (2) documentation and case file review; (3) visual inspection of specific locations; (4) observation of events, including processes such as trials or elections; (5) media monitoring; or (6) legislative monitoring.

A. Gathering Information through Focus Groups, Town Hall Forums, and Community Meetings

Focus groups, town hall forums, community meetings, and other group discussions create a dynamic interaction among participants that may bring forth information not elicited in individual interviews. Observing as people share information and compare different points of view can provide insight into community norms and values. Participants in a group meeting may also raise new issues for researchers.

While group fact-finding methods have value, advocates must consider whether such methods will be appropriate, productive, and safe for participants. Advocates should consider whether a group setting is likely to elicit the answers sought or whether it will be a barrier to honest participation. Will fear of either real or perceived infiltration

or retaliation influence the answers given or willingness to participate? The identities of the participants, the power relationship between them, and the setting will influence the outcome. For example, a group meeting of inmates about prison rape conducted within the prison and under the observation of guards will likely produce different results than private interviews with former inmates no longer in the physical control of their guards.

The *focus group* is a specific methodology best suited to assess attitudes and influences that impact people's behavior. Focus groups may be useful in the formative stages of project planning, to identify areas for further investigation, or to document attitudes and opinions that impact either the findings or the recommendations. Focus groups involve small numbers of people—approximately 8-10 participants[151]—and participants generally share similar characteristics, demographics, or experiences.[152] Advocates should work with at least two groups with the same characteristics and questions to develop the best data.[153] Advocates should prepare a series of open-ended questions ahead of time to both guide and promote the discussions.[154] The questions and responses should be memorialized, either by using a note-taker or recording and transcribing the conversation. Again, the fact-finder may consider the impact this will have on participants' willingness to speak freely or at all.

Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture (TRC): Using Focus Groups

The Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture (TRC) provides rehabilitation services for victims of torture in Ramallah, Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). When TRC decided to develop and publish a practical, user-friendly guide on the rights of detainees, staff knew that the guide should be based on real life experiences. As a preliminary step, TRC conducted focus group meetings with its own clients, as well as other torture survivors and TRC staff members. The information obtained through the focus groups about what rights were being abused helped TRC create the framework and structure of the guide. The community focus groups were also important for identifying the rights about which the community lacked awareness.[155]

Fact-finding may also take place in less structured group meetings, community forums, and group interviews. Group discussions such as these may help identify patterns and themes or additional avenues of investigation. In addition to the statements made by participants, fact-finders may document their observations about the dynamics of the groups themselves. As with focus groups, the conversation should be memorialized through notes or transcripts. Observations about group dynamics, domination of the conversation by powerful or intimidating participants, presence of infiltrators or perpetrators of human rights violations or abuses, and other such factors all must be noted and factored into the analysis.

[151] Robert Shumer, *Youth-Led Evaluation: A Guidebook* (Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center, 2007), 40.
[152] For example, participants who are similar in terms of social class, age, level of knowledge, gender, and cultural/ethnic background. *See, e.g.*, Brian Katulis, *Women's Rights in Focus: Egypt* (New York: Freedom House, 2004), 34.
[153] Mary Ellsberg and Lori Heise, *Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide For Researchers and Activists*, (Geneva: World Health Organization and Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), 2005), 133. Also available online at http://www.path.org/files/GBV_rvaw_complete.pdf.
[154] Richard A. Krueger, "Planning Guide for Focus Groups," accessed Jan. 17, 2014, http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rkrueger/focus_planning.html.
[155] New Tactics in Human Rights, "Engaging victims to develop a community education user friendly guide 'know your rights' titled 'Detainees Guide,'" accessed Jan. 17, 2014, http://www.newtactics.org/tactic/engaging-victims-develop-community-education-user-friendly-guide-%E2%80%9Cknow-your-rights%E2%80%9D-titled; Treatment & Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, accessed Jan. 17, 2014, www.trc-pal.org.

Los Angeles Community Action Network: Gathering Data

The mission of Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) is to help people dealing with poverty create and discover opportunities, while serving as a vehicle to ensure they have voice, power, and opinion in the decisions that are directly affecting them. LA CAN's constituency is homeless and extremely low-income people living in downtown Los Angeles. LA CAN uses multiple approaches such as impact litigation, community education and empowerment, and leadership development to address issues related to homelessness, health, housing, and discrimination.

LA CAN supporters rallied behind Executive Director Pete White's calls for them to "Speak up. Speak out. Speak now."

LA CAN also conducts community-based monitoring and documentation. One example is LA CAN's ***Taken for Granted: Ignoring Downtown Food-Insecurity*** (2005). For this Community Assessment Report, LA CAN's main goal was to gather data from a variety of sources, using a variety of methods, to create a comprehensive picture of the conditions and needs of Central City East of Los Angeles. To collect information from various sources to answer five research inquiries about food insecurity and barriers to accessing nutritious food, LA CAN used eight monitoring tools:

1. *Mapping:* GIS and mapping technologies to generate maps showing retail food venues, residences, and population density.
2. *Sidewalk surveys:* Trained surveyors to visit food venues and fill out forms documenting prices, food selection, business hours, sanitation, acceptance of Electronic Benefits Transfer cards, and other factors.
3. *Interactive exercises:* Four exercises with 60 residents that use visual cues to obtain residents' perceptions of foods' nutrition, determine their food preferences, gauge residents' financial restrictions to buying food, and learn about local food availability.
4. *Food journals:* Eighteen residents document the food they eat on a daily basis for one week.
5. *Surveys:* Trained volunteers administer pilot-tested surveys at locations throughout the community for two weeks. 196 people voluntarily participate and receive tokens of appreciation.
6. *Focus groups:* Focus groups with senior citizens, families with children, homeless people and people living with disabilities. The same eight questions are asked for each focus group.
7. *Interviews with charitable food providers:* Interviews with food providers about the logistics of providing free meals, the nutritional content, accommodations for special dietary needs, and the financial aspects of running the service.
8. *Community forums:* Sharing of the initial findings with community residents to gather their feedback on how to improve food insecurity and garner healthier and economical food to residents in the community.

Based on the findings from these monitoring tools, LA CAN evaluated the information through statistical

analysis, coding, identification of themes, and visual presentations of food availability.[156] LA CAN presented the final results along with recommendations in its report, which is available on its website at http://cangress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/foodreport.pdf.

B. Collection and Review of Documentary Evidence

Document and case file review involves the collection and review of documentary evidence. Documentary sources include laws, regulations, or other government documents; letters; transcripts; court, police, and prison records; videos and photographs; medical records; and forensic evidence.[157] Secondary documentary sources include news reports, books, articles, and other written resource materials.[158] Advocates should always be mindful of the credibility of these sources, and where appropriate, ensure the evidence is signed or similarly certified.[159]

Besides being a direct source of information, documents and case files can also provide insight into the dynamics of the human rights violation. For example, examining trial transcripts and decisions can expose a judge's reasoning, enabling the advocate to gauge whether the judiciary has an understanding of the human rights issue or whether its reasoning reflects harmful misperceptions. Case files can also provide the advocate fact patterns as examples of the human rights violation, as well as efforts undertaken by victims to seek protection or a remedy.

Advocates can also apply simple quantitative analysis to documentary evidence to estimate prevalence of a particular violation or evaluate how laws or policies are working in practice. For example, if police records indicate a high number of assaults, but prosecution records show a low number of cases opened or convictions obtained, this disparity may indicate a breakdown in the justice system.

Practitioner's tip: During the monitoring process, advocates should take special care to record all relevant details about the sources of information gathered, including URLs if available. In the documentation stage, it is important to be able to cite the sources of information that substantiate any claims.

Secondary sources often provide important historical context for understanding the information gathered through other fact-finding methods. In addition, looking at the media's treatment of issues may provide insight into the social or political climate relating to the abuses or violations.

C. Observation

Observation of sites, processes, and events provide fact-finders with invaluable information. While observation often requires an on-site presence, television and webcasts make it increasingly possible to conduct remote observation of some events, such as trials.

An on-site investigation mission requires advance planning. Advocates should prepare by conducting background research and preliminary interviews prior to the visit. To maximize efficiency, interviews should be scheduled prior

[156] Los Angeles Community Action Network, accessed Jan. 17, 2014, www.cangress.org; Interview with LA CAN, by The Advocates for Human Rights, Mar. 5, 2010; Los Angeles Community Action Network, *Taken for Granted: Ignoring Downtown Food-Insecurity* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Community Action Network, Oct. 2005). Also available online at http://cangress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/foodreport.pdf.
[157] Jennifer Prestholdt, *Familiar Tools, Emerging Issues: Adapting Traditional Human Rights Monitoring to Emerging Issues*, ed. by Rachel Tschida (Minneapolis: Center for Victims of Torture, 2004), 9. Also available online at https://www.newtactics.org/sites/default/files/resources/Familiar-Tools-Emerging-Issues-EN.pdf.
[158] Ibid.
[159] D. Ravindran, Manuel Guzman, and Babes Ignacio, eds., *Handbook on Fact-Finding and Documentation of Human Rights Violations* (Philippines: Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), 1994), 14.

to the visit when possible; additional follow-up and scheduling can continue on-site. Advocates should evaluate any special expertise needed to assess the particular conditions and carefully select team members with special skills based on those needs. For some kinds of visual inspection (such as detention facilities) or process observation (such as trials), advocates may need to request permission from the authorities in advance in order to gain access.[160] Logistical planning will also be needed for accommodation, transportation, and interpretation or translation needs.

Advocates should make careful, objective notes about every aspect of the event that they are observing, including number of participants, timeline of activities, names of public figures, content of discussions, and other relevant observations. Diagrams, sketches, or maps of details may be helpful, as well as descriptions of gestures, physical appearance, or movements. Informal conversation and interaction with participants may also yield insights and should be recorded in notes.

Process Observation: Observation of processes, such as legal proceedings or elections, can be used to gather information about how laws and policies are implemented in practice. Observation not only reveals gaps or failures in systems that lead to human rights violations, but may also show positive practices. Observation of all components of the system enables advocates to better understand how the system works or fails to work and how to make practical recommendations.

WATCH: Court Monitoring Makes a Difference

Founded in 1992 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, WATCH engages in court monitoring to make the justice system more effective and responsive in handling cases of violence against women and children, and to create a more informed and involved public. Its mission is premised on the principle that public scrutiny will help ensure a just and fair court system.

WATCH's court observation provides an example of process observation to protect the rights of women and children. WATCH is able to carry out wide scale monitoring by using trained volunteers to observe and report on more than 5,000 hearings per year in the Hennepin County court system. These volunteers carry red clipboards to maintain a visible presence in the courtroom and record important data and observations on specially designed forms.

Using the information observed through daily court monitoring, WATCH is in a unique position to document problems and make recommendations on how the courts can improve safety for women and children. Based on its court monitoring work, WATCH has published a report on the judicial response to victim impact statements during sentencing, established a fatality review task force to review domestic homicides and address gaps in the county system, and advocated for the creation of a domestic violence county court. One judge had this to say about WATCH, "They hold up a mirror [to us] . . . and sometimes we don't like what we see."[161]

[160] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Part Three: The Monitoring Function," in *Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring* (New York: United Nations, 2001), 146. Also available online at http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/training7part59en.pdf.
[161] WATCH, accessed Jan. 17, 2014, www.watchmn.org; Interview with WATCH, by The Advocates for Human Rights, May 17, 2010.

Process observation undertaken in conjunction with fact-finding interviews and document review is particularly effective in the areas of administration of justice and elections. Observation can be an important tool in assessing the independence of the judiciary, the effectiveness of domestic remedies for violations, and in determining the extent of impunity.[162] Trial observation can also help to bring attention to cases of human rights violations and provide support to the victim.[163]

Advocates should consider how their presence may influence the process they are observing. When process observation is used as a method of fact-finding, the purpose of observation is not to determine the guilt or innocence of the person standing trial, but to assess the fairness of the proceeding.[164] The presence of observers may be used, however, not only to document problems but to encourage adherence to existing rules or standards.[165]

Prior to undertaking observation, advocates must have sufficient information about the process they intend to monitor and the standards to which those processes should adhere so that they can understand what is happening, what should be happening, and what is missing from the proceedings they are observing. Advocates should understand the rules governing access to the location, recording of proceedings, interaction with participants, and conduct during proceedings. Election and trial monitors risk ejection from the site if their conduct fails to conform to existing rules, and they must consider such rules when developing their tactics.

The Immigration Court Observation Project: Process Observation

The Immigration Court Observation Project (ICOP) of the National Lawyers Guild is a law-student led initiative to attend immigration proceedings, document observations, and identify lapses in due process in order to bring about greater transparency and accountability in the immigration court system. Since 2006, hundreds of law students in the New York City area have observed over a thousand hearings. ICOP is premised on federal regulations that give the general public access to observe most immigration proceedings, so ICOP has developed policies for its observers to follow. If ICOP's attendance is questioned, ICOP observers will respectfully state the right to observe. It is also ICOP's policy to always defer to a respondent who is concerned about an observer's presence. Therefore, ICOP does not release a respondent's name or additional identifying information gathered at a hearing.[166]

Observers should consider how they wish to appear while observing, including where they sit or stand, and whether they wish to be identifiable as observers. Court monitoring notes should be treated as any interview findings and, where appropriate, should safeguard the confidentiality of the parties involved.[167] Advocates who are undertaking a large court monitoring project should develop standardized forms to promote consistent adherence to observation protocols and improve data collection. If possible, observers may seek to obtain copies of the case files of the proceedings they observe.[168]

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[162] Ravindran et al., *Handbook on Fact-Finding*, *supra* note 159, at 51.
[163] International Commission of Jurists, *Trial Observation Manual* (Geneva: International Commission of Jurists, 2002), 3. Also available online at http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/research/trial_observation_manual.pdf.
[164] Ravindran et al., *Handbook on Fact-Finding*, *supra* note 159, at 51.
[165] For resources on monitoring other kinds of processes, please see Chapters 14 and 15 of the OHCHR Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring on Election Observation and Monitoring Demonstrations and Public Meetings; National Lawyers Guild Legal Observer Training; and the Election Defense Alliance Comprehensive Guide to Monitoring Computerized Elections.
[166] Immigration Court Observation Project, accessed Jan. 17, 2014, http://nycicop.wordpress.com/.
[167] International Commission of Jurists, *Trial Observation Manual*, *supra* note 163, at 15.
[168] See the Section on Collection and Review of Documentary Evidence discussed in Chapter 3.

On-site Inspection: Advocates seeking to monitor human rights often visually inspect sites, conditions, photos, and other evidence. Going to the site of the human rights abuse allows the advocate to visually inspect the site, conduct face-to-face interviews, speak to more community members, take photographs, and obtain greater access to documents, news reports and evidentiary material. Inspection used along with interviews and other methods can corroborate and ascertain the credibility of information obtained.

Advocates must always consider the effect of their presence on-site.[169] Will their presence do harm by bringing unwanted attention, opening up victims to retaliation, or creating false expectations for victims? Alternatively, will sending a fact-finding mission help generate greater solidarity for victims and persuade the government to take steps to address the violations? Monitors must be careful to avoid creating false expectations or making promises to victims that the monitor will be unable to keep.

D. Audiovisual Tools

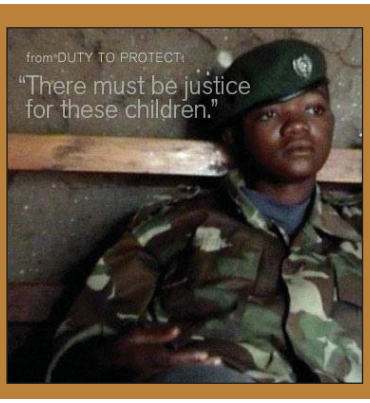
Technological improvements and decreased equipment costs have greatly increased the ability of advocates to use audio, photographic, and video tools to monitor human rights. MP3 recorders, video cameras, and digital cameras are inexpensive and easily transported, increasing opportunities to use them to create powerful images of human rights abuses. Online tools such as YouTube and Flickr, as well as social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook, make it easy to distribute these images.

Advocates should pay careful attention to the principles of human rights monitoring when using audiovisual tools, particularly the principles of do no harm and confidentiality. Before making any audiovisual recording, advocates should ensure that they advise the individual as to what they plan to do with the recording and obtain informed consent for its use.

Advocates can use audio and video to record stories and experiences directly from victims and witnesses. Because these recordings can be made immediately and universally available through websites, audio and video can be powerful tools for use in advocacy and education as well as in human rights fact-finding.

WITNESS & AJEDI-Ka: Documenting with Video

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), children make up the majority of combatants in a war that has claimed over five million lives. AJEDI-Ka, a DRC nonprofit organization that demobilizes and reintegrates child soldiers, joined forces with WITNESS to produce several videos documenting the situation of child soldiers in the region. *A Duty to Protect* videos feature the voices of child soldiers and document their experiences, including the sexual exploitation and violence against girl child soldiers.[170]



Photography has long been a powerful means of documenting human rights abuses. Advocates can use photos to tell a story, either simply through the imagery itself or by creating photo galleries with accompanying captions. Photographs can also be used in a report to help illustrate findings. Where the content may be particularly troubling or difficult to read, use of photos can help make the document more accessible to readers. When

[169] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Part Three: The Monitoring Function," *supra* note 160, at 136.
[170] Witness, "A Duty to Protect: Child Soldiers in the DRC," accessed Jan. 16, 2014, http://www.witness.org/campaigns/all-campaigns/duty-protect-child-soldiers-drc.

photographs will be used as documentary evidence, some human rights advocates recommend ensuring that photographs are signed or otherwise certified.[171]

USHRN and the Testify! Project: Using Video to Bring the Stories of Human Rights Abuses to the United Nations

In an effort to bring to the stories of ordinary citizens affected by human rights abuses to the United Nations, the U.S. Human Rights Network (USHRN) launched an innovative video contest called the Testify! Project. The United States' human rights record was reviewed for the first time by the new UN Human Rights Council in November 2010 as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. Even though the UPR took place in Geneva, Switzerland, the Testify! Project made it possible for the USHRN to contribute a grassroots portrayal of the status of human rights in the United States.

Participants in the Testify! Project were asked to create a one to two minute video to answer in their own words the questions: "How are human rights violated in your community?" and "What should the U.S. Government do to protect these rights?" More than 60 individuals and groups submitted videos on human rights issues that ranged from access to adequate health care to the denial of rights of indigenous communities, to immigration issues faced by the gay and lesbian community. After a public vote narrowed down the finalists, a panel of judges with expertise in human rights and video activism selected two winners. Romeo Ramirez's video described how he and his fellow migrant laborers work to put food on the tables of families across the U.S., yet could hardly feed their own families and face sub-poverty wages and frequent abuse from employers. The second round winning video, submitted by the La Jolla Band of Indians, highlights a community walk bringing attention to the disproportionately high rates of rapes and assaults on native women.

In September 2010, the USHRN held an event in Geneva to bring these stories to the Human Rights Council delegates who would be questioning the United States during the UPR. A compilation of the top ten videos was also screened, followed by a panel discussion, at an event in Geneva during the week of the United States' Universal Periodic Review in November 2010. "The Testify! Project is a chance for the voice of people in the community who have suffered the indignities and violations of their human rights to be heard," said Ajamu Baraka, Executive Director of USHRN.[172]

Advocates can plan to take their own photographs to document images as part of the fact-finding process. When taking photographs, monitors should at all times remember to observe the monitoring principle to do no harm. Monitors should never take photos of identifiable individuals without discussing the intended use of the photos and obtaining informed consent. In addition, advocates should take photographic images of sites of human rights abuses, signage, landscapes, maps, venues, large groups of people, etc. to add depth to the monitoring process.

Some websites also offer free use of photographs, but advocates should exercise caution in selecting appropriate photos for use in reports and advocacy as using a photo unconnected to the material could undermine credibility. Organizations may also consider working with professional photographers who are willing to donate their photographs for use in publications. Photographs are subject to copyright, which generally belong to the original photographer. Advocates should seek written confirmation of the photographer's permission to use the photograph and or assignment of copyrights.

[171] See Ravindran et al., *Handbook on Fact-Finding*, *supra* note 159, at 14, for a discussion of the level of proof in fact-finding.
[172] Witness, "Testify! Project - Universal Period Review of the U.S.," accessed Jan. 17, 2014, http://www.witness.org/campaigns/all-campaigns/us-human-rights-network.

E. New and Emerging Technologies

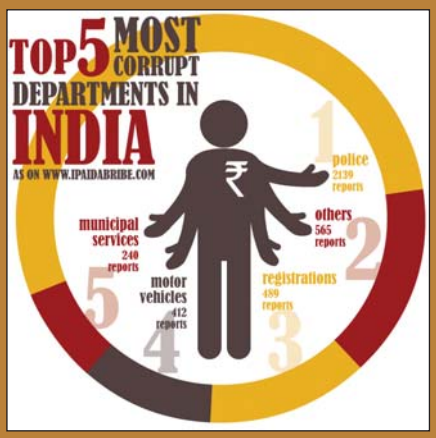
New and emerging technologies have led to an explosion in low-cost, creative tools for documenting human rights abuses. As technologies have continued to evolve, the increase in technological access throughout the world has opened great opportunities for using technological tools in human rights monitoring, reporting, and protection. These new, easily accessible tools make it easier to shine the light on human rights abuses and share the information in near real-time. Advocates should remember however, that human rights monitoring involves more than just exposing the problem. In a broader context, new and emerging technologies should be used in the same way as other fact-finding tools—to identify the facts and contextualize what is happening on the ground. Advocates need to use this information to analyze where the system breaks down and recommend the appropriate responses to address the problems. (See Chapter 6.)

Mobile phone technology: Mobile technologies are transforming the way organizations and individuals can access and share information. "Globally, more people now have access to a mobile device than to justice or legal services."[173] Today, practically anyone with a mobile phone has the capacity to report or record human rights violations by with photo and video documentation. Grassroots organizations around the world are using crowd-sourced data gathered via mobile technology to identify problems, analyze trends and craft appropriate interventions and recommendations for reform. Crowd-sourcing applications can also link into other kinds of social networking platforms, allowing for a broader dissemination of information.

Location-aware applications—generally for more sophisticated smart phones—are another tool that can be used for crisis reporting and election monitoring. Using built-in GPS sensors to pinpoint physical location, "geo-tagging" platforms such as FourSquare, Brightkite, Loopt, and Google Latitude allow mobile phone users to transmit their precise location for tracking and coordinating movements and meetings. During the 2009 violence in Gaza, for example, citizens reported the exact location of violent incidents using SMS and phone-based GPS.

I Paid a Bribe: Using Mobile Technology to Document Corruption

The I Paid a Bribe initiative was started by the Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, based in Bangalore, India to help confront issues of transparency and accountability in India. The technology allows citizens to report via SMS and smart phone the nature, pattern, location, and frequency of acts of corruption. The information was used through a campaign called Bribe Bandh to pressure the government to ratify the UN Convention against Corruption (which the government ratified in May 2011). The I Paid a Bribe initiative also worked with other civil society partners including India Against Corruption to pressure the government to pass a long sought after anti-corruption law.[174]



Mobile platforms also enhance the ability for organizations to monitor critical events and share information through a simple SMS subscription. For elections, mobile phones and innovative mobile platforms have been critical tools in monitoring fraud and engaging citizens. Further, developments during the Arab spring and

[173] UN Development Programme, "Mobile Technologies and Empowerment: Enhancing human development through participation and innovation," accessed Jan. 17, 2014, http://www.undpegov.org/mgov-primer.html.
[174] I Paid a Bribe, accessed Jan. 17, 2014, http://ipaidabribe.com.

mobilizations across Europe and the United States around the global fiscal crises illustrate the potential of mobile communication in supporting people's movements. Across North Africa and the Middle East, civil society organizations were supported with variations on the Ushahidi platform, such as in Egypt, where Ushahidi maps were produced by the Development and Institutionalization Support Center (DISC) in Cairo to monitor events during and after the January 2011 uprising. In Libya, the Ushahidi platform was adapted immediately at the start of protests there in 2011, at the request of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to allow citizens and observers to submit information about conditions on the ground, as protests and violence expanded.

Mapping and Geospatial Technologies: Mapping is a powerful tool that can be used for a wide range of human rights issues, both at the local and global level. Maps also offer new possibilities for advocacy, promoting transparency around human rights issues, tracking impact of human rights efforts, and engaging the community in local issues.

As a monitoring tool, maps can visually help unravel the dynamics of human rights violations and clearly reveal patterns in inequities. For example, mapping has been used to expose humanitarian crises resulting from conflicts in places like Darfur and Syria. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum combined data from the U.S. State Department and United Nations, witness testimonies, and satellite imagery on a Google Earth map. Past Google Earth images of the same locations allowed them to compare before and after images of specific villages. This provided documentation that more than 2,000 villages were destroyed between 2004 and 2005, out of a total of 3,300 villages destroyed between 2004 and 2009. Using similar data sources and technological tools, USHMM created another 3D map that "identifies the locations and number of the 2.5 million displaced persons struggling to survive in camps, villages, and other locations throughout Sudan, and the more than 200,000 refugees from Darfur in the camps in Chad."[175]

Electronic mapping is a newly developed tool using electronic networks, satellite imagery and tracking. Mapping used in tandem with the widespread availability of the internet, social networks, mobile telephones, and related communications technologies have provided advocates with new ways to track human rights violations and use the information to advocate for better protection.

Incident mapping can be a simple but powerful electronic mapping tool using SMS to report incidents and map the data geographically. It can be used to track reports from natural disasters, violent crime, or citizen reporting in elections. Crowdsourcing, a popular crisis mapping tool, is a type of incident mapping. Used to map a wide range of issues, crowdsourcing makes it easier for a large group of people from all over a region, city, country, etc., to document where problems are occurring and when. This information is used to help respond to problems, provide aid to regions that need it and keep the public up-to-date on issues as they progress.

[175]U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Crisis in Darfur," http://www.ushmm.org/learn/mapping-initiatives/crisis-in-darfur; Tactical Technology Collective, "Maps For Advocacy: An Introduction to Geographical Mapping Techniques," https://tacticaltech.org/maps-advocacy.

Ushahidi: GIS Mapping

Ushahidi, which means "testimony" in Swahili, is a free information sharing platform for information collection, visualization and interactive mapping. The core platform is built on the premise that gathering crisis information from the general public provides new insights into events happening in near real-time Ushahidi was first developed in 2007 as a website to map incidents of post-election violence in Kenya. It had 45,000 users, who submitted reports via the web and mobile phone. The Ushahidi open source PHP/Javascript platform has been used as a tool in crisis mapping throughout the world, from in mapping outbreaks of xenophobic violence in South Africa to aggregating, translating and disseminating incident reports and requests for assistance after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Crowdsourced information can be submitted using multiple channels, including SMS, email, Twitter, and web form.[176]

Another type of electronic mapping is through satellite imagery. Human rights organizations have begun to use satellite technology to expose rights abuses in closed regions. Satellite imagery is extremely effective for showing the before and after effects of major conflict, such as the destruction of villages, or mass movements of people, such as the displacement of refugees. Using previously taken GPS coordinates from villages reported to have been attacked, researchers have been able to purchase a series satellite images of these villages taken over a period of time. These time-stamped images give clear evidence of the before and after effects of an attack.

American Association for the Advancement of Science: Using Google Earth to Document Human Rights Abuses in Syria

In September 2012, the Geospatial Technologies and Human Rights Project of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) began investigating reports of human rights abuses happening in the escalating conflict in Aleppo, Syria. AAAS used Google Earth to obtain two satellite images from August 2012. The AAAS analysis documented more than one hundred instances of damage to buildings and infrastructure, numerous shell craters, multiple improvised roadblocks, and the presence of heavy armored vehicles in civilian neighborhoods, and resulted in the AAAS report, "Satellite Imagery Analysis for Urban Conflict Documentation: Aleppo, Syria."[177]

[176] Ushahidi, accessed Jan. 17, 2014, http://www.ushahidi.com/about-us; Urban Times, "Crowdsourcing Maps Using Ushahidi," accessed Jan. 17, 2014, http://www.theurbn.com/2012/02/crowdsourcing-maps-ushahidi/.
[177] American Association for the Advancement of Science, "Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights & Law Program," accessed Jan. 17, 2014, http://www.aaas.org/aleppo_retrospective.

Photograph and Image Credits

Chapter 4

page 55 A.J. Olmscheid, The Advocates for Human Rights
page 57 ACLU of Southern California Flickr stream

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page 59 Amy Bergquist, The Advocates for Human Rights
page 61 Witness: See it. Film it. Change it. Flickr stream

- URL: http://www.flickr.com/photos/humanrights/5693473393/in/photolist-9F7xhn-crkBWL-crkB7u-9TC7Le-9TEX6u-bePKiM-9gF6uy-9EteqF-a8mycu-b9Pp3c-eBfm4G-b2cRe6-b5rua2-82p4DX-cv6vWo-e91eHL-7CSNsU-7CSLnY-7CNYnP-7CSNMd-7CNYXk-7CSLud-7CNYHX-7CNXoX-fHPQ5X-fHPPDk-fHPPgX-fJ7ooy-fJ7p4U-fJ7ovw-fJ7odu-fJ7oL3-fHPPpK-fHPQeB-fJ7oTS-fHPQme-fHPPXH-fJ7oQ3-fJ7pcA-981CRm-88u7hc-cnTX3f-8mTwos-9mWUnV-dzZDhq-fkcuhT-9n3V3E-aB1riK/
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