

**A SYNTHESIS OF THE  
LEARNING FROM THE  
STOP VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN  
CAMPAIGN 2004-10**

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# CONTENTS

1. Introduction .....	5
2. Introduction to SVAW – issues within Amnesty International.....	5
Vision and mission.....	5
The vision was not accepted by all.....	5
What changed internally to enable the campaign to work .....	6
What did not change: the challenges for staff .....	6
3. Issues affecting the review process and results.....	9
Internal issues affecting what the review could achieve.....	9
Methodology .....	10
Feedback on the main report .....	11
4. What did the SVAW campaign do and achieve? .....	12
What did the SVAW campaign do? .....	12
What was achieved and what was most influential in changing the context for women? ...	13
What worked less well?.....	14
5. Critical learning issues for Amnesty International going into the future .....	16
Women’s rights.....	16
Global campaigning .....	17
Endnote .....	22



# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Stop Violence Against Women (SVAW) campaign was the first long-term global campaign for Amnesty International, spanning six years from 2004-10. The campaign was very ambitious both in its subject matter and because it required substantial shifts in Amnesty International's ways of working. The resulting campaign review report is consequently detailed and complex; many of the key issues around Amnesty International's performance and achievements are interrelated. This synthesis report does not attempt to summarize or capture all the details and complexity. Rather the intention is to highlight the key learning and to discuss, with some recommendations, the critical issues for Amnesty International in the future, both in relation to women's rights and major global campaigns. The full report can be found under the index number: ACT 77/007/2010

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO SVAW – ISSUES WITHIN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

### VISION AND MISSION

The SVAW campaign was ambitious and a new way of working for Amnesty International. It brought women's rights to the centre stage of the organization. Although Amnesty International had worked on issues of violence against women (VAW) and women's rights before, these initiatives had been small-scale and not central to the organization's approach. SVAW focused on economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR), especially for women and their right to protection from violence, and this was a departure from the more traditional, geographically based work of Amnesty International rooted in civil and political rights. The leadership knew that this would require fundamental and radical shifts within the organization; in order to achieve real changes in the global conversation around women's rights and VAW, and also to effect changes in international, national and community policy, law, behaviour, and attitudes staff would need to learn about VAW, women's rights, and how to work with vulnerable women and run a long-term global campaign. The vision was new and inspirational, and time, staff and resources right across the movement were to be harnessed for this work.

There was a need for this move because Amnesty International was "late to the table" in taking up women's rights as core human rights.

### THE VISION WAS NOT ACCEPTED BY ALL

Despite the value and importance of this work, there was some opposition internally from

staff (and from some members) to making women's rights a central long-term campaign:

- Some did not like the shift from the traditional civil and political rights issues.
- Some were ambivalent about women's rights meriting this level of attention.
- Some did not like the shift from research-led to campaign-led work. The organization was established for conducting research on individual countries and that research shaped the campaigns; they wanted to continue to work in this way in spite of the organization's shift to a new mission.

The tensions, ambivalence and the resistance to change (also seen in other evaluations) created many challenges for staff, as discussed below.

## **WHAT CHANGED INTERNALLY TO ENABLE THE CAMPAIGN TO WORK**

The SVAW campaign did achieve some notable changes across Amnesty International, for example:

- Many staff and members see women's rights as an integral part of the agenda on human rights.
- A SVAW network of staff and volunteers linking those working in the International Secretariat (IS) and Sections and structures (S/s) on women's rights issues was established and will continue as a women's rights network, providing information, learning and advice.
- There are now researchers, campaigners, legal and policy staff well able to work on women's rights and SVAW.
- Many members are galvanized and motivated by the SVAW campaign.
- Some S/s have seen a growth in membership and increased activism through SVAW.
- Some S/s have learned to work well in new partnerships.
- New approaches to promoting change were piloted in some teams and S/s.
- There was a growing awareness of the critical importance of developing good databases and monitoring for a global campaign and some positive changes were introduced by the SVAW team and the Learning and Impact Unit (LIU) towards the end of the campaign.

## **WHAT DID NOT CHANGE: THE CHALLENGES FOR STAFF**

The shifts in focus and the resulting tensions created many challenges for staff, some of which were unresolved.

### **FOR THE SVAW TEAM**

- In this context “working differently” was needed, but the SVAW team lacked the authority to co-ordinate or manage the research and policy needed to underpin a coherent global campaign.
- SVAW staff across the movement felt marginalized in many ways and there were high levels of staff turnover, within for example the IS and some S/s such as Amnesty International USA.
- Many SVAW staff interviewed reported suffering from high levels of stress and heavy workloads. Worrying signs of unhappiness, mainly among women staff, were seen during the review.

### **FOR THE RESEARCH STAFF FROM THE REGIONAL PROGRAMMES**

- They had heavy regionally based workloads that they were expected to keep going.
- They did not receive sufficient and timely training in interviewing vulnerable women nor did they receive back-up support on their return from difficult contexts.
- There were no ethical or child protection policies in place to guide their work.
- They were expected to build new sets of partnerships and keep existing networks of key informants going.
- Some research staff were ambivalent about the new global campaign.

### **FOR THE REGIONAL CAMPAIGNERS**

- Many were unsure how to link to SVAW, except to access additional support and campaign budgets.
- They had limited budgets for campaigning; they were under-resourced but S/s made high demands on them.

The changes needed to work across the key functions in the IS (research, campaigns, policy) were slow or did not happen. They continued to compete for budgets, to plan simultaneously but not jointly, and there was no clear alignment or sense of all working together towards one common set of goals.

Across the movement communications within the IS and between the IS and S/s remained weak, leaving staff often unaware of who was doing what, and when and how their work fitted into the bigger picture. Timelines were not always followed, research reports were often late for the campaigners and/or S/s, there were sometimes multiple reports with no sense of priority, and the work of S/s around the campaigning was not well co-ordinated. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was patchy and relatively new to Amnesty International, meaning there was no clear narrative for staff about what was being done, by whom, where and when within the global campaign. Information and learning was not widely shared.

Although a key focus was changing the attitudes and behaviour of state and non-state actors

towards VAW, the balance of resources within Amnesty International did not noticeably shift in favour of the global south. Most S/s in the south remained small with limited budgets; they were not able to undertake work on own country (WOOC) research, did not shape the overall research agenda in their countries and often did not participate in the research. They lacked resources to develop campaign materials themselves, though many adapted those coming from the IS and some generated small-scale materials of their own.

It was often unclear who had authority, responsibility and accountability for the different elements of the work and for ensuring it was co-ordinated, targeted, relevant and used.

## 3. ISSUES AFFECTING THE REVIEW PROCESS AND RESULTS

### INTERNAL ISSUES AFFECTING WHAT THE REVIEW COULD ACHIEVE

The challenge of the review was major. It was to assess a six-year campaign across every country where Amnesty International works and has a presence; to understand what had changed for women experiencing violence at the levels of policy, law, state responsibility for VAW, funding, attitudes and the behaviour of women and men at community level. The review was also meant to look at Amnesty International growth, increased activism and mainstreaming gender within the organization.

In order to conduct the review, it was important to be clear about what was expected/aimed for by the campaign. This was hard to define because:

- The campaign had two very different strategies that were largely unconnected and changed over time.
- The goals were hugely ambitious – such as making VAW unacceptable globally – and many were not achievable in six years.
- There were multiple, diverse aims and objectives in the IS and across S/s.

The lack of a clear guiding strategy accompanied by a unified plan made it hard to pin down what Amnesty International wanted to achieve in six years. The problems of massive and changing aims were compounded by:

- The absence of a central database recording the work.
- The lack of clear agreed data on budgets.
- Limited information available on what was done by who and what monitoring and assessments were done across the movement.
- Very few evaluations were available, known or shared across the movement.

The lack of accurate agreed budget data continued throughout in spite of the hard work of the SVAW team, and no budgets are presented in the review. There is no central place for holding evaluations and up to the end of the review the reviewers were still discovering evaluations they had never heard about. Very few external reviews appear to be approved or publicly available and many internal reviews seem not to be widely disseminated. Reviews are not actively informing learning or practice in Amnesty International.

All of these factors meant it was difficult to understand and define what was to be achieved and what actually happened.

## METHODOLOGY

The SVAW team understood the challenge posed by the scale of the review and a case study approach was agreed. The plan was to delve deep into several case study countries and issues in order to build understanding, evidence and analysis of the SVAW campaign. Of the four case studies chosen from the global south, two worked well (Kenya, Venezuela) and two did not (Uganda and Nepal). Staff and partners, and some members, were actively involved in two countries, but less so in Uganda because of other priorities. It was not possible in the event to visit Nepal for internal reasons. The case study of Amnesty International UK and the contributions of several northern sections were very strong.

The case studies were supported by interviews, questionnaires, attendance at key meetings in Europe, an active advisory group, and reading a wide range of documents and reports. Many people – staff, partners and members – participated willingly and openly in the review. Some opted out or were hard to reach.

It was interesting to observe several features that ran through interviews with staff:

- Every interview was very different.
- There was no shared narrative around the SVAW work within teams, across functions, or across the movement.
- A fragmented way of working, lack of shared vision and shared sense of accountability were evident.
- People knew their own story and individual work in great detail and wanted that recorded, but often knew little about the work of others.
- They spoke openly but asked for confidentiality and several showed a fear of being quoted.
- Some staff were highly critical of each other and their comments had to be toned down in the final review report.
- It proved impossible through selected interviews to understand “the bigger picture”, especially at the IS, and so more and more interviews were added. This was a very time-consuming process.

Our aim originally was to work *with* staff and partners to jointly understand and learn about the work of SVAW, its achievements and challenges. In fact this proved difficult. We failed to get a participatory, collegiate process going, though that was the original aim; waiting for written reports and given written feedback appears to be the preferred method of communication and interaction. We worked in relative isolation, with occasional advisory meetings and recently two-three face-to-face feedback sessions. We received good feedback and discussion in the advisory group and face-to-face meetings and found these sessions much more productive and constructive than the written to and fro around the writing of the review. However, people appear to prefer working in writing, commenting on drafts.

## **FEEDBACK ON THE MAIN REPORT**

The case study participants have fed back, mainly very positively, on the review report. Informal feedback has been received that is very supportive of the findings and many staff appreciate seeing their experiences and ideas clearly reflected in the report. Some concern has been expressed by a few staff at the IS that the report is negative and in places inaccurate. But many people have recognized the issues raised and few points are disputed; indeed many of the main findings echo those seen in earlier evaluations of SVAW and other campaigns.

Some early signs of change within Amnesty International that the review findings have contributed to are beginning to emerge. For example, gender is a core component of the new Integrated Strategic Plan (ISP) and the Global Priority Statement and a Diversity and Gender Mainstreaming Task Force has been established. How these changes in Amnesty International rhetoric get translated and embedded into practice remain a challenge; budgets, strategies and plans, and mechanisms to monitor and hold staff to account with regards to gender and women's rights have yet to be developed.

## 4. WHAT DID THE SVAW CAMPAIGN DO AND ACHIEVE?

### WHAT DID THE SVAW CAMPAIGN DO?

There were myriad activities undertaken and much work done, especially in the early years. All S/s were required to do work on SVAW and they engaged with the campaign in many ways:

- The IS research teams produced 64 reports; 38 were produced in 2004-05 with 26 written from 2006-10. S/s in the north produced a number of WOOC research reports, of which 11 were launched as Amnesty International reports.
- The research was wide ranging and covered topics such as sexual violence and rape in conflict, domestic violence, trafficking, women's access to justice, due diligence and the role of state and non-state actors in preventing VAW, safe schools for girls, service delivery needs for women experiencing violence, HIV and AIDS, and more. The reports covered Africa (26), the Americas (14), Europe and Central Asia (11), Asia (7), and Middle East/North Africa (MENA, 6).
- A number of significant partnerships and networks were formed by many S/s, especially the End Violence Against Women coalition in the UK and the USA, and the TUN network (Stop Rape) in Kenya, Ireland and Sweden (taken from the sample of countries visited or those who contacted the reviewers).
- The IS built a number of partnerships around the SVAW campaign and ran two partner workshops to get advice and feedback on the global campaign in 2007 and 2008.
- Many campaign actions were taken. Some were around WOOC research, where members were mobilized to take action around issues directly affecting women and VAW, for example lobbying for refuges in municipalities in Sweden, for educating peacekeepers on sexual violence in conflict in Ireland, for joined-up government action on VAW in the UK, on the rights of Indigenous women for protection in the USA, for the adoption of new Sexual Offences act in Kenya (based on unpublished action research done in Kenya), and on including the issues of VAW in mayoral elections in Venezuela.
- Many campaign actions were taken around issues in other countries by members, for example supporting the opening of refuges in Turkey and lobbying for legal change there; supporting women human rights defenders in Iran; sending postcards to support justice for women in Latin America. There were certainly a large number/amount of marches, letter and postcard writing campaigns, and e-campaigning done by members across the movement linked to SVAW research reports and key issues of concern, but these are not documented centrally and can only be detailed by visiting each country and talking to SVAW campaigners.
- Speaker and awareness raising tours were arranged around the disappeared in Mexico, comfort women in Japan, and many other issues.

- Conferences, seminars and videos were held/made in order to raise awareness, bring concerned men together to discuss relevant issues (for example in the UK nations), and to bring women's organizations together across a region to share issues (for example in the Gulf).
- Some members lobbied members of parliament and local government and local councils around issues of specific concern.
- Some staff got involved with partners in training police, judges and local officials around VAW issues; for example, in Kenya a manual was written about rape procedures for doctors and lawyers and training was given.
- Lobbying work was carried out by the IS and S/s staff at UN and European Community (EC) levels around specific issues relating to VAW, for example on sexual violence in conflict in Democratic Republic of the Congo and redefining the crime of rape in Europe. Cutting-edge thinking on a new abortion policy for Amnesty International was developed – and adopted – for the SVAW campaign.

## **WHAT WAS ACHIEVED AND WHAT WAS MOST INFLUENTIAL IN CHANGING THE CONTEXT FOR WOMEN?**

The achievements are well documented in the review for each case study. These included:

- The power of WOOC; locally based research linked to campaigns in own country did bring about real change in a number of countries studied (USA, Nordic countries, Ireland, UK). This was carefully documented and evidenced by each country, and the changes included: the signing of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the UK Government; increased funding for Indigenous women and a raised profile around the need for a VAW act in the USA; raised awareness of and action around rape in Ireland; the compulsory provision of shelters for battered women in Sweden, and greater protection for raped women in Nordic countries; a new Sexual Offences Act in Kenya; the commitment of some mayoral candidates to ending VAW as part of their manifesto in Venezuela.
- Close working with partners and in networks, as in the USA, Sweden and Kenya, led to specific changes in for example policy, law and funding for Indigenous women and women who have been raped. Networks raised issues and awareness and lobbied for change directly, for example, on codes of conduct for peacekeepers, having a joint policy on VAW across government, promoting refuges and much more, as in the UK and Ireland.
- Amnesty International's work amplified the concerns being raised by women's and human rights activists in several countries.
- Participatory campaign methods – as used in many parts of Africa – raised awareness and challenged attitudes through, for example, theatre, role-play and face-to-face interactions with women's groups. More formal methods of campaigning using letter and postcard writing and e-campaigning tend to be less effective in Africa where an aural rather than a writing

tradition prevails.

- Having a number of reports and actions on SVAW across Europe allowed effective lobbying by the IS and S/s at EC level around redefining the crime of rape.
- Working with municipalities and police, for example in Venezuela, raised awareness.
- Awareness raising around women's right to protection contributed to an increase in complaints to police about VAW by women in Venezuela.
- Lobbying at the UN on women in conflict and their need for protection and in the EC on redefining the crime of rape.

There are undoubtedly many other examples of positive change from across the movement. But the lack of good reporting, a shared database and the collection of evidence of change mean that these can only be gleaned by visiting each country. The existing available evidence is unfortunately incomplete.

Much was achieved in the countries of the north where they undertook their own research, campaigned with their members on issues well known and understood by them, lobbied people they had access to and shared a language and culture with, and where there were real resources for producing materials and undertaking campaigns. These conditions were not present in most contexts in the south, although the examples of Kenya and Venezuela show that where campaigning is locally designed, delivered and supported by action research, changes can be achieved.

## **WHAT WORKED LESS WELL?**

- The research reports were sometimes late and the focus of the research changed so that campaigners were sometimes left without good material to work with on campaigns they had started and were committed to.
- The links between the research produced and campaign strategies were quite weak; it is not known whether all research reports were campaigned on, which research was most appreciated and used, and which was largely ignored.
- There was no collaboration on campaigning for countries outside one's own, so there was no critical mass/voice on an issue. Indeed, which S/s campaigned on which issues and in which countries is very hard to track.
- The lack of focus of the SVAW campaign meant the research and campaigning was, in some cases, very dispersed and fragmented.
- Amnesty International staff in the global south have little influence over research reports and campaign messages used in their own country. This reduces the organization's effectiveness on issues like VAW that have to be tackled at local level, as well as nationally and internationally.

- Campaign messages from outside a country can be counter-productive in some countries given current north-south politics.
- Whilst some participatory methods have been used (for example in parts of Africa), Amnesty International relies mainly on a limited range of campaign methods – such as writing letters or postcards – that may not be the most effective way of bringing about change in VAW.
- Communications between the IS and S/s were not good at times.
- The lack of an exit strategy for the campaign left many S/s bewildered about how to end or continue their work on SVAW and their partnerships, many of which had been built up carefully over time. Campaigners did not get advice on ending SVAW until the campaign was almost over and this was a source of huge concern to S/s staff. They feared losing their reputation and being seen as instrumental if they just dropped partners they had “wooded” painstakingly, yet there is no clarity about how SVAW will continue and how they can fund the existing SVAW partnerships.

It is not clear how Amnesty International expects to effect change in state and non-state actors around VAW through long-distance written campaign communications. Far more thought is needed to analyze the likely links between campaign actions and expected changes. Working on ESCR will require rethinking some core Amnesty International campaign strategies and widening the methodologies and approaches used.

The SVAW campaign achieved – and contributed to – many changes at the local/country level. But there is little evidence that Amnesty International was able to use its “might” (name and reputation, resources, research and campaign work) to “change the global conversation”, make VAW unacceptable or ensure the State took responsibility for both state and non-state actor actions on VAW (due diligence).

# 5. CRITICAL LEARNING ISSUES FOR AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GOING INTO THE FUTURE

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women's rights as human rights and work on ESCR are certainly more integrated into Amnesty International thinking and work than before the SVAW campaign; good partnerships have been built in many countries with women's and other human rights organizations concerned with SVAW, but their future is now uncertain. Women's rights are not yet part of Amnesty International's DNA as SVAW intended, because:

- The Gender Action Plan faltered.
- All the initial documents for the Demand Dignity campaign lacked a gender analysis or aims around women's rights.
- The other new campaigns also lack any explicit analysis of or commitment to women's rights, despite a commitment to gender being explicit in the ISP.
- Some staff do not see the need to learn about or work on women's rights – it is still seen as optional.
- There is little/no systematic staff training across the IS and S/s available on gender.
- With the ending of SVAW the number of staff employed to work on VAW and women's rights has declined in the IS and S/s.
- The new Gender, Sexuality and Identity Unit is intended to lead the IS's work on gender and related issues in the new ISP that began in April. The unit's staff is under recruitment. Its mandate, at present, appears unwieldy.
- The Diversity and Gender Mainstreaming Task Force appointed by the International Executive Committee (IEC) is covering a large canvas including diversity of all kinds, although it has to report in a year.<sup>1</sup>
- Gender mainstreaming is not currently funded in the IS or some S/s. The incentives for prioritizing this work appear unclear.

These issues are a real cause for concern because gender inequalities cut across every difference in human life, and women's rights – or lack of them – are fundamental to human rights work.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A clear plan for ensuring Amnesty International takes women's rights seriously is needed urgently. The plan should include clarity on who is responsible for taking this work forward, clarity on resources and budget available, clarity on what authority this staff/these staff have (particularly over other's time), and a clear timeframe. The plan needs to be properly monitored and transparent accountability mechanisms – including what each person is accountable for, who they are accountable to and how they will be held to account for delivering on their part of the plan – needs to be put in place.
- The plan should aim to ensure that working for gender equality and women's rights is built into the work of Amnesty International through training for staff in these issues, ensuring they are central to every piece of research and campaigning, providing proper incentives to encourage staff to take gender issues and women's rights seriously, and establishing clear lines of accountability for taking a gendered approach to all work.

**GLOBAL CAMPAIGNING****STRATEGY AND EXIT FOR GLOBAL CAMPAIGNS**

Amnesty International has major resources for analysis and conceptual thinking, but the following is recommended:

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A guiding strategy needs to be in place from the start of the campaign.
- The strategy has to be clear and focused so that staff can understand it. Staff across the movement should have a chance to discuss the strategy before it is finalized so that they can own it and understand how to implement it. Aims and objectives should not change over time.
- Clear implementation plans/guidance are needed so staff at the IS know what they are aiming to do, how, why and who they need to work with. They need to understand their own role and how and when they need to work with others. This plan/guidance also needs to be understood by S/s so they understand what can be expected from the IS and what is expected from them.
- More joint planning is required; plans and budgets for global campaigns need to be made jointly across the key areas of research, policy and campaigns. Good co-ordination is required, within the IS, between the IS and S/s, and across the movement.
- Plans need to be "owned" by those expected to implement them. Transparency about roles, responsibilities and how individuals and teams will be held to account are required to prevent "defensive" behaviour due to a lack of clarity.
- The work needs to be "doable", realistic and manageable (to reduce the high staff turnover and motivate staff).
- A clear exit strategy is required well in advance of a campaign coming to a close. This should be based on Amnesty International having played its role, rather than on arbitrary timing or budget decisions. Exit strategies need to be discussed with partners to gain clarity on why, how and when partnerships will come to

a close.

### **WORK ON OWN COUNTRY (WOOC)**

The evidence is strong that both the WOOC research undertaken and the campaigning work that was adapted to the local country context worked well in bringing about specific targeted changes. Each country focused on different issues, identifying these through working closely with new partners and undertaking needs and other assessments of the context. WOOC has worked because:

- It was grounded in local and national realities and priorities and required a sophisticated understanding of the local context.
- It enabled the research and associated campaigning to be relevant and nuanced; it addressed issues of power.
- It required building models of change and using non-traditional approaches and methods that were appropriate for bringing about concrete changes in their context (for example, working through coalitions, strategic lobbying, training police, participatory drama, radio shows, joint research). It encouraged staff to engage with government differently, that is in a less confrontational or more problem-solving way.
- It allowed direct access to key decision-making forums, such as government, MPs, local councils, refuges and other service providers, and women who experienced violence.
- It involved working with partners who had complementary skills and who understood how to leverage change. It enabled Amnesty International to see how it fitted into a bigger picture of multiple players all working towards ending VAW.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- More S/s need to be supported to build the skills to do this research and associated campaigning. Resources (financial and human) should be made available to S/s that currently lack them to carry out WOOC research and associated campaigning. The approvals process for WOOC research needs to be clear and streamlined to prevent unnecessary delays and to encourage S/s to carry out their own research. New methodologies and approaches should be encouraged that address the cultural, legal, religious and other factors that currently enable VAW to be seen “as the norm”. New ways of working at the community as well as the State level are needed if change for women is to happen. The human rights principle of participation could be made stronger; giving a voice to those affected rather than speaking on their behalf.

### **GLOBAL SOUTH**

S/s in the south saw SVAW as very relevant to local realities. Consequently, SVAW was a major part of their work and was very motivating since it was something they could work on concretely. They employed some innovative methodologies and adapted campaigns to their local needs, with several S/s reporting real changes (for example, in Kenya and Venezuela). However, many S/s were limited in what they could do since their capacity (human and financial) was out of line with the scale of ambition of the campaign. In addition, they had very little control over research in their countries and were largely not involved in deciding which other S/s would campaign on their country – and how. The inadequacy of their formal

representation within the movement makes it hard for their voices to be heard.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Budgets and staff resources need to be increased to be in line with the aims of the campaign. This should include sufficient capacity building and resources for carrying out own country research and for developing campaigns and materials that are appropriate in the given context.
- Staff should be involved in deciding what research is conducted in their country and should be involved in the research itself. This requires improved communication and equitable dialogue with research teams at the IS.
- S/s conducting campaigning on a country where Amnesty International has a presence should work collaboratively with that S/s to determine the most appropriate approaches and methods to be used.
- The SVAW campaign overtly recognized the issues needed to grow Amnesty International's work and membership in the global south, highlighting Africa and MENA for special attention; the initiatives undertaken need to be continued.
- A discussion on the existing strategy for building greater autonomy, representation and decision making in the global south is urgently needed.

#### **PARTNERSHIPS**

Some very good partnerships were built by S/s; the fear of being branded as “Johnny-come-lately” was managed effectively by staff and good relationships and networks were built in several countries (for example, in Kenya, Ireland, UK). This allowed Amnesty International to learn about context and content from others and be relevant in a field of work new for the organization. It built Amnesty International's credibility and enabled it to learn about new approaches/different ways of working. Amnesty International brought its name, funds and key skills to the networks in a two-way process of sharing and learning. Strategically working in networks and alliances built up the voice/critical mass for change around VAW. Nevertheless, few IS partners wanted to participate in the review, which was a cause of concern.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Amnesty International should continue to adopt the practice of listening to and learning from partners. It needs to be wary of appearing overbearing, wanting to dominate the agenda or of “using” others for its own benefit. Clear agreement and shared understanding of roles and responsibilities within partnerships is required.
- Partnerships need to be institutionalized if they are to bring benefits in the long term; they should not be based on individual relationships.
- Exit strategies need to be agreed with partners with plenty of time to prevent negatively affecting future partnership development as well as incurring a reputational risk.

#### **MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) AND LEARNING**

There was no concept or practice of monitoring the SVAW campaign as a single global effort

to bring about change for women. There were almost no monitoring databases to draw on in the IS or S/s for this review. There was little time for reflection and learning and shared analysis about whether the work was done in ways that could bring about transformative change. While the IS, individual S/s and staff members did undertake some monitoring, reporting and a few evaluations, these were not easily accessible; there was no strong culture of communicating, sharing and learning across departments or countries. There appeared to be a lot of resistance to self-analysis, external criticism and to sharing work transparently; this contrasts sharply with the robust critique of governments and other agencies that Amnesty International is well known for.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Staff need to be given the space and time to build their understanding of how change happens and to develop and communicate their plans, which should in turn be monitored.
- Global campaigns need to be monitored at both the global and local levels. Records of who is doing what and when need to be kept locally and centrally and they need to be used frequently to assess the progress of the campaign.
- Frequent, continuous and structured dialogue and reflection on the management of the campaign, the appropriateness of interventions, the changes, or impact (positive or negative) brought about, and the direction of the campaign are required, identifying what has worked well and less well.
- Learning needs to be shared, discussed and used to shape future work through improving communication channels and cutting across the Amnesty International silos.
- Monitoring, learning and impact assessment need to be integral functions of campaigning and project work – they should be a fundamental part of everyone’s role. Clarity is needed on who is responsible for monitoring and reflecting, who is responsible for sharing learning and who is responsible for making subsequent changes, what authority these people will be given and how they will be held to account. Clarity is also needed on who will manage the overall process and how they will be held to account.
- The LIU needs the authority as well as the responsibility and adequate resources for ensuring the above; it needs to further develop M&E systems and guidelines and build staff capacity in M&E and learning.
- More independent external evaluations, managed by the LIU, are also required to “hold a mirror up” to Amnesty International. These need to be done in a participatory manner, shared transparently and used to improve work.

### **WAYS OF WORKING AND THE CULTURE OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

In addition to the challenge identified above, there is a variety of characteristics of Amnesty International’s way of working and culture that impede the organization’s talented staff from performing effectively, including:

- The hierarchies and silos in Amnesty International make it quite fragmented, formal (internally and with S/s) and with little time for free and open discussion, reflection and learning across the organization.

- The lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities – “where the buck stops” – or where authority lies can result in “decision drift”, uncertainty, and insecurity of staff about their work.
- A culture that is confrontational rather than supportive and collaborative; the complexity of work on ESCR requires a very different approach, uniting staff to work towards a common purpose, in which they understand the complexity of the work and the need to work together. It also requires a greater focus on working with rights holders to identify problems and solutions.
- Lack of good two-way communications, listening and sharing. This can lead to multiple demands and communications, and to staff overload.
- Current ways of working can be disempowering for staff, especially those with less formal authority and those in smaller S/s.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Staff should be more actively involved in strategy and planning, and in discussions around what works well and what does not. More (well-facilitated) space and time needs to be given to share concerns, and to think together, both within and across teams and departments. The organization should encourage and facilitate processes for members to engage in thinking creatively about the issues and more thought should be given to their role in bringing about change. Improved transparent communication and clearer lines of accountability across the organization would improve staff morale and encourage a more collaborative and collegiate way of working.
- Overall, if Amnesty International wants to continue to work on ESCR, it needs to move away from a largely legal and confrontational approach to one that better embodies the human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination, voice, transparency and accountability.
- Finally, in line with many of the recommendations in this synthesis report, if the analysis and recommendations of the SVAW review are to be taken seriously and used to improve the future work of Amnesty International, it is imperative to be clear about who is responsible for disseminating the learning from the review and for making the changes required to improve future campaigning. A clear plan is required and accountability mechanisms put into play.

# ENDNOTE

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1 According to Amnesty International the purpose of the Diversity and Gender Mainstreaming Task Force, appointed and funded by the IEC, is to address how the movement can best ensure that it is a hospitable place and trustworthy partner for people and groups who live at the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination.



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