

Intermediate Data Analysis for Human Rights

A Handbook

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Preface

The publication *Data Analysis for Monitoring Human Rights* was prepared for human rights advocates and monitors at a time (1993) when the use of data analysis in human rights was in its infancy. At the time it was written, human rights databases were of small scale. Human rights advocates from many countries requested that no computers be used or even referenced because of their lack of availability outside the industrialized world.

Translated into Russian, Indonesian and French, that handbook was widely used as an introduction to the subject. It still serves as a valuable elementary handbook and text for the application of data analysis to human rights.

However, since that time, the need for an intermediate level handbook and text has become apparent. The level of basic quantitative education among human rights workers has improved. Also, the demands made on these workers and their organizations for providing credible evidence of violations is a reflection of the increasing professionalization of human rights advocacy. Today, human rights workers must include credible evidence of the violations of human rights norms in their messages to government leaders and agencies, the media, and international, governmental, quasi-governmental, and non-governmental organizations. These target organizations include the United Nations and its bodies, governmental organizations that play a role (for example) in international aid, international tribunals, truth commissions, courts, and major non-governmental organizations.

Accordingly, we made a commitment to produce an intermediate level handbook to the assembled participants at the plenary session of the international conference "IAOS2000: Human Rights, Development, and Statistics," sponsored by the International Association of Official Statisticians at Montreux, Switzerland on TK September, 2000. This handbook is our fulfillment of that promise.

We believe that we are entering the age of evidence-based human rights advocacy, and our goal is to make available to every human rights workers and students the educational materials that will meet the needs of the new century.

Our goal in this handbook is to provide human rights workers with the ability to support their advocacy with credible, objective, and undeniable evidence of human rights violations. We do not propose to turn human rights personnel into professional statisticians. We do hope to make it possible for such personnel to do simple analyses (which may be all that is necessary), examine reports critically and above all, to know when to look for professional assistance.

This handbook can also be used as the text in a course in data analysis for human rights human rights workers for either classroom or self-study, and as a handbook of methods to meet the needs of a wide range of students and workers from grass-roots human rights workers to students in courses in higher education. It has been validated by its use in our graduate course U8165, Workshop in Human Rights Research, Data

Analysis, and Reporting, taught annually at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University since TK.¹

This is a *handbook* and not a traditional text for a first course in statistics. The latter usually emphasize procedures more suitable to research or business applications. However, the statistical tools discussed in this handbook have been used in definitive high level analyses for truth commissions and other international bodies. We put great emphasis on both understanding and presentation of evidence of human rights violations in reports.

You do not *need* a computer to carry out the analyses we discuss. However, the computer is now everywhere in the field, and where the amount of data is large, use of the computer may be the only feasible way to carry out any analysis meeting professional standards.

Every method we show is illustrated with an example using real data and these examples and exercises derive from experience, not the classroom. Many of these examples are based on the large-scale violations database covering the years 1959-1996 in Guatemala, assembled by the International Center for the Investigation of Human Rights (CIIDH²). We the authors, and you the readers are fortunate that the CIIDH allows us to use these data, collected at great effort and expense. Thanks to the generosity of Human Rights Watch, we are also able to use a database of violations in Kosovo during 1998. In addition to these sources, our examples are drawn from many other countries.

Education and training work! The preliminary survey work for a landmark study of violence against women during the Liberian civil war was based on the elementary methods discussed in the first edition of *Data Analysis*. In their self-instruction and field work, the women who performed the survey used copies of *Data Analysis*, which they carried into the field in their backpacks.³

Some data analysis tasks in human rights – as in other fields – call for specialized expertise. There are many statisticians who will supply such expertise as volunteers. To access such assistance, contact the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights of the American Statistical Association at TK.

We wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the many friends, colleagues, students, and volunteers who made helpful criticisms and suggestions on the first edition. In preparation for this second edition, we acknowledge the valuable inputs of Patrick Ball (AAAS), Marilyn Dueker (University of Connecticut), Bert Verstappen (HURIDOCS) and tk (others to be named consider Jabine, Scheuren, Columbia, students).

Louise Spirer

¹ <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/sipa/U8165/>

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³ (Swiss, et al. 1998, p. 8) TK

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Herbert F. Spirer, Ph.D., is Adjunct Professor of International Affairs at Columbia University, Professor Emeritus of Operations and Information Management of the University of Connecticut, and consultant to the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program. He has been a consultant to many NGOs on data analysis for human rights, and is a past Chair of the American Statistical Association's Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights, and a former Vice President of the Institute for the Study of Genocide. He is co-author of the AAAS publications *Data Analysis for Monitoring Human Rights*, *Data Analysis for Human Rights: An Intermediate Handbook*, *Misused Statistics*, *State Violence in Guatemala 1960-1996: A Quantitative Reflection*, and co-editor of *Making the Case: Investigating Large Scale Human Rights Violations Using Information Systems and Data Analysis*. He was made a Fellow of the American Statistical Association and elected a member of the International Statistical Institute in recognition of his achievements in applying statistics to human rights.

Louise Spirer is an independent scholar, editor, and author in the field of human rights. Co-author of articles on human rights, she was the editor of newsletter of the American Statistical Association's Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights, and a member of the Board of Directors, and former Treasurer, of the Institute for the Study of Genocide, and a co-author of the AAAS publication *Data Analysis for Monitoring Human Rights*, *Data Analysis for Human Rights: An Intermediate Handbook*, *Misused Statistics*, and a co-editor of *Making the Case: Investigating Large Scale Human Rights Violations Using Information Systems and Data Analysis* and a contributor to *Organizing and Repression in the University of San Carlos, Guatemala, 1944 to 1996*.