



## Profile: Scott Campbell, Deputy Director for Field Operations, Global Rights

[10-25-04 by Regan Morris]

Civil unrest, armed conflict, gender discrimination--all the troubles in the world concern Scott Campbell. As deputy director for field operations of Global Rights, Campbell travels the world helping people get better access to justice. LawCrossing talks with Campbell about the changing role of Global Rights and about his experiences promoting human rights in Congo, Bosnia, and elsewhere.

Scott Campbell says his New Hampshire childhood was "Waspy" and that he was drawn to faraway places and exotic people with fascinating experiences. Campbell has realized one of his dreams. He has traveled all over the world, and he speaks six languages: Spanish, French, English, Sango, Lingala, and some Swahili.

Talking to LawCrossing via mobile phone from the backseat of a whizzing Manhattan taxi, Campbell says he loves observing how people communicate or fail to communicate when they speak different languages. He laughs while trying to explain where he wants to go to a confused taxi driver.

"That would be a classic example of poor communication," he says of his attempt to get the taxi driver to drop him at the right place.

Campbell, 40, is late for a meeting concerning racism against Africans living in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America. He is used to making plans and giving interviews on the run from his mobile phone: he travels about 150,000 miles a year.

Global Rights, which celebrated its 25th birthday last year by changing its name from the International Human Rights Law Group, helps activists around the world get better access to laws and identify human rights violations. The goal is to empower the powerless and give options to victims of oppression and discrimination.

About half of the staff of Global Rights is

comprised of attorneys, and Campbell has a public health background. Campbell knows the international laws regarding torture and discrimination, for example, and he teaches people how they can use those laws. But his job is nothing like a legal staff position in a law firm.

Campbell's job is to make sure the various field offices around the world are running smoothly and to develop strategy for new projects. Global Rights works in countries where change is afoot and deals with local activists already struggling to change policies, laws, or regimes in their countries. Campbell says his main job is to support those local activists.

He says the role of Global Rights has changed and that there is more room now for people without law degrees. Campbell holds a Master of International Affairs and a Master of Public Health from Columbia University.

Global Rights used to be a small group of human rights lawyers that focused solely on "using the law strategically to promote human rights and doing human rights investigations with an eye to using the law."

The group has expanded beyond just using the law to promote human rights.

"You don't need a law degree to go interview somebody who's been tortured and to write a report on it and make a fuss," he said. "So there are a lot of skills that we found urgently needed building on the ground."

While the group still works with attorneys and helps people lobby to create new laws, the focus is now broader.

"Our basic mission is to amplify the voices of local human rights actors around the world," he said. "And so all of our programs seek to strengthen the often courageous and often under-recognized work of local human rights activists and strengthen their ability to expose human rights violations."

Campbell first joined Global Rights in 1995-1996 as a project director in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire). He rejoined the Law Group in 1999 when they re-opened a field office in Kinshasa. Africa has been home for Campbell several times. He joined the Peace Corps after college and moved to the Central African Republic.

Campbell has also worked for Human Rights Watch, conducting research on torture victims, among other projects, in Congo, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, Sri Lanka, and India. Interviewing victims of atrocities was a painful challenge of the job.

"I think you need to establish, carefully establish, some personal barriers there," he said. "When I was actually interviewing a lot of victims, you definitely need to have a balance of remaining human and being sensitive to people without absorbing all of their experience."

In general, the job is fulfilling, mainly because Campbell says he is "building links" between people who want change and insti-



tutions and information that can help foster that change.

. He says that the average human rights worker in rural Colombia or Afghanistan does not know about international laws or treaties that their country may have signed but is not enforcing.

"There's a lot of UN or regional human rights mechanisms that have been just completely out of reach for a lot of people," he said. "So we try to build links, helping make people aware of how you can use them to change your reality in your backyard."

As the taxi finally arrives at his destination, Campbell says he feels privileged to work with such diverse and dedicated people.

"This is a lot more fun than most things I can think of to do with my time," he said. "It's inspiring. I get to meet inspiring people. I came from a pretty boring, white-bread, WASPY background in the northeastern U.S. I feel very lucky. I work directly with colleagues from all over the world who have fascinating backgrounds and experience."

The group he is rushing to meet includes people from Colombia, Uruguay, and Brazil.

"It's great. They're up here, and we're able to work with them and make their voices be heard a little bit louder in Washington," he said.