PROACTIVE PRESENCE

Field strategies for civilian protection

Liam Mahony

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those who are struggling for their lives, their dignity and the integrity of their families and communities in situations of widespread violence and abuse. It is they who take the greatest risks and invariably find the most creative and durable solutions for confronting violence and transforming their societies. We who have been privileged to work beside them, and help in our small way, can only marvel and respect their courage and resilience in the face of such challenges.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

T he plight of civilians trapped in war and misery stands as one of the greatest challenges of our times. Increasingly, all those engaged in efforts to address this situation recognise that providing material assistance alone is insufficient and that, even as wars continue, measures to provide greater *protection* to civilians are required.

But what measures? Faced with ongoing abuses of human rights and looming or actual humanitarian crises, advocates and the media demand that something must be done. Short of armed peacekeeping or intervention, never an easy and not necessarily a wise choice, one option is to deploy unarmed international staff, under a variety of institutional mandates, in the belief that their presence will offer some protection against abuse. Several such deployments have occurred in the past two decades, though with mixed results. Until now, however, there has been no systematic study of the techniques and strategies that these field missions can employ to better the odds to make a difference on the ground and to protect civilian life and property.

In launching the project that led to this publication, we wanted to put flesh on the bones of a theory of field-based protection derived from the experience of human-rights monitors, humanitarian protection staff and ceasefire monitors. The most effective field workers engaged in civilian protection have an intuitive understanding of what should be done, and what techniques work. Our aim was to record and analyse this experience, and then present the concepts underlying it so that others can benefit. The model we offer – of *proactive* presence –features the skills and tactics that international field personnel can use to deter attacks on civilians, to encourage and support local communities in their own efforts to ensure security, and to influence governments and authorities to institute and sustain reforms. It is

a model based on tapping into the synergies between a strategic local presence, well-informed international pressure and indigenous reform movements.

Over 250 interviews were undertaken during research for this book, and they provide most of our information here. Those interviewed include over 100 international field workers with experience in dozens of conflicts, representatives of governments and armed groups in three field situations, and members of civil-society organisations and communities in many countries. We are especially grateful to those civil-society respondents in Colombia, Sri Lanka and Darfur, where we conducted field studies, for taking risks to meet and share their views with us.

We relied on the co-operation of several institutions, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), the World Food Programme (WFP) in Sudan, Peace Brigades International, the Nonviolent Peaceforce and the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).

Additionally, several people with extensive field experience read and commented on drafts of the report, or otherwise advised on the project, especially: Nicholas Howen, Ben Majekadounmi, Ian Martin, Michael O'Flaherty, Diane Paul, Christophe Peschoux, Roberto Ricci, Beat Schweizer and Marc Vincent. Their advice and support was extremely useful. We are also grateful to Alfonso de Colsa, Laurie Goldman, Geoffrey Gresh, Yvonne Hutchinson, MCM Iqbal, Carmen Lozano, John Mahony, Ram Manikkalingam, Larry Minear, Cecile Mouly, Yumiko Nakagawa, Roger Nash and Michael Smits for assistance with the project, including translation, research assistance or comments on draft reports.

The HD Centre aims to contribute to efforts to improve the global response to armed conflict. A key area of our concern is the protection of civilians, whether through the direct means of facilitating and encouraging civilian guarantees in ceasefires and peace agreements, or indirectly through suggesting strategies to authorities and international agencies. This manual is the third in a series of publications offering strategic advice and practical guidance. The others in the series are:

1 *Humanitarian Negotiation. A Handbook for Securing Access, Assistance and Protection for Civilians in Armed Conflict,* which provides humanitarian field personnel with an understanding of the basics of good negotiation skills, better equipping them to defend and win acceptance of humanitarian and human-rights principles in the field

2 *Protection. An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies*, which we co-authored with Oxfam. This book describes the relation of protection to the traditional assistance activities of humanitarian workers, and gives practical advice on enhancing the former without jeopardising the latter.

The present book reaches out to an even wider audience, but with a more specialist message – looking explicitly at those mandated to ensure the protection of civilians and human rights on the ground. We will publish later this year a book exploring the ideologies held by those who prey on civilians, and who appear to disregard basic humanitarian principles.

It is our hope that this manual, and all our work in this area, will assist those international agencies deployed in situations of conflict as they grapple with the dilemmas involved in protecting civilians. HD Centre personnel working on issues of civilian protection include Deborah Mancini-Griffoli and Hugo Slim, both of whom contributed to this book. Ms. Mancini in particular played a key role in ensuring the manuscript reached publication. It was my pleasure to co-ordinate their work, and that of Liam Mahony who took the lead in researching and writing the manual, and with whom I worked closely to conceive and design the project.
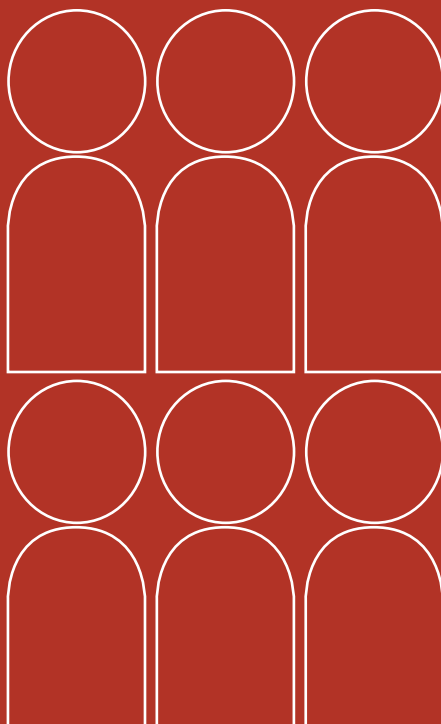
David Petrasek
Policy Director
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

1 | INTRODUCTION

About this manual: audience and approach

The objective of this manual

This manual is intended to help the international community to make better and greater use of a powerful tool for protecting civilians: the conscious and proactive use of unarmed international field missions deployed in conflict zones. Based on detailed field research analysing the strengths and weaknesses of past field missions, its objective is to encourage and guide international organisations that might deploy personnel mandated to protect civilians. Calling for greater use of such deployments, this manual offers detailed strategic and tactical recommendations to achieve the greatest possible protection.

Unarmed field missions can provide crucial protection, whether voicing the concerns of isolated communities in Colombia, or defusing inter-communal tensions in eastern Sri Lanka. They have provided a cover of safety for besieged activists in deteriorating conditions in Haiti and East Timor, and built public confidence in fragile periods of reconciliation in El Salvador and Guatemala. Whether it's a bold press release or a well-timed visit to a local commander to chat over coffee, committed field officers have been constantly improvising creative and practical steps to prevent abuses – thereby developing the tools of protection.

The well-designed field mission can create an atmosphere in which the costs of abuse are more apparent to the perpetrators of violence against civilians. It can provide a safer space for civilians paralysed and stigmatised by terror tactics, support reform efforts inside a state apparatus, and create a bridge between parties cut off from dialogue by extended conflict.
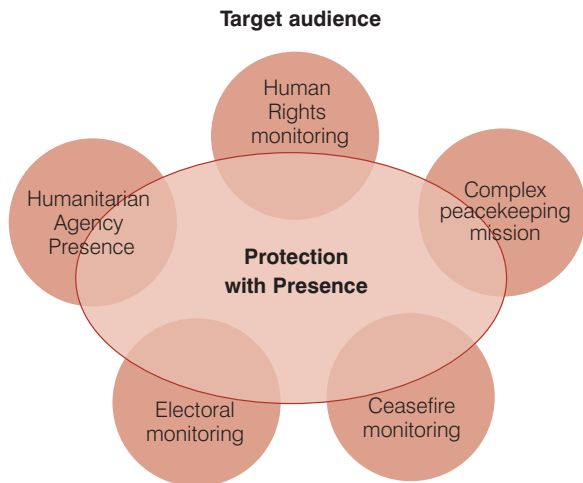
Target audience: diverse institutions with the common objective of protection

This manual should be useful to widely diverse international deployments, including security/ceasefire missions, humanitarian missions, human-rights monitoring missions, electoral monitoring missions and complex UN peacekeeping presences, all of which carry out unarmed protection. We use broad and inclusive concepts and terminology, with the objective of rising above any institutionally specific jargon and presenting a general analysis of protection strategies for all. Each organisation will need to adapt these lessons to its own institutional environment and mission. Our objective is to help not only the institutions that send field missions into conflict zones, but also individual members of staff working in the field.

Most UN agencies are accountable to system-wide commitments to integrate protection into their operations.[1] Many humanitarian international non-government organisations (INGOs) in recent years have also made explicit protection commitments. Other institutions, such as the ICRC, UNHCR, OHCHR, and human-rights INGOs have long-standing commitments to protection. Unfortunately, the implementation of all of these commitments in the field is not uniform, and one still hears, far too often, that 'protection is someone else's job'.

This manual argues that a wide variety of institutions present in conflict zones can and should implement protection strategies in the field (Figure 1.1). Some have questioned this broad approach, expressing concerns that the complexity and difficulty of protection work should not be underestimated, that professional standards must be maintained, and that encouraging organisations to do protection work without sufficient commitment, training or rigour could dilute the quality of the overall international approach to protection, perhaps even also undermining the

Figure 1.1:
Target audience: missions that protect with their presence

Target audience

Human Rights monitoring

Complex peacekeeping mission

Humanitarian Agency Presence

Protection with Presence

Electoral monitoring

Ceasefire monitoring

credibility of those who do it well. This concern is reasonable, which is why this manual aims to promote not only a greater quantity of field presence, but also a higher quality and effectiveness of protection work on the ground.

The few institutions that may be currently developing a rigorous approach to protection have insufficient capacity to meet the needs of civilians. A great deal more is needed. The challenge we face is to learn from past experience, and to help each institution capable of contributing substantially to protection strategies to develop the personnel, training, management and strategic resources both to offer more protection and to do it well. No attempt to achieve this can be perfect, but fear of imperfection is not sufficient reason not to try.

Human-rights monitoring missions

Human-rights missions, whether stand-alone missions of the OHCHR or components of a peacekeeping operation, have a clear mandate for protection. There is an obvious overlap between 'protecting civilians' and 'protecting human rights'. The practical activities of these missions, however, have sometimes been too focused on the collection of data on abuses and the production of reports, activities also emphasised in these missions' training processes. This manual calls for a more comprehensive toolbox, and demonstrates how flexible human-rights missions have used their presence more creatively to achieve protection goals.

Complex peace operations

In integrated missions led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) or Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the activities of human-rights monitors, political officers and humanitarian, civilian police and military components can all contribute to the protection strategies outlined here. These missions tend to bring substantial political weight, allowing field officers to project protective impact much more effectively. Although this study has not focused on armed missions of the 'blue helmet' type, these are nevertheless carrying out many of the same functions as those described here in order to maximise their protective impact, and they too may find this manual useful.

Ceasefire monitoring missions

Ceasefire missions sometimes have fairly limited mandates. Nevertheless, the inescapable connection between attacks on civilians and the re-escalation of hostilities usually creates a built-in link between a ceasefire agreement and the need to protect civilians. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission is a case in point: it has a classic role of ceasefire monitoring, but this falls within an agreement that also articulates broad protection concerns for civilians, opening the door to an active protection role for the mission. Similarly, the Kosovo Verification Mission was able to stretch its 'ceasefire' mandate to allow for substantial intervention on behalf of

threatened civilians. Although they often focus on military skills in their monitoring and recruitment, these missions should also develop a more diverse set of protection tools to meet their objectives effectively.

Electoral monitoring missions

An electoral monitoring mission might appear to have a straightforward technical function but, when installed in a conflict zone, it takes on a protection role. Insecurity is often a primary motivation demanding electoral monitoring, which usually has an objective of establishing an environment favourable to an effective vote. Thus, for example, the UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) in 1999 was officially an electoral monitoring mission, but the overwhelming threat to the planned consultation's success was the lack of civilian security, which Indonesian authorities could not or would not provide. Thus the mission became by default a protection mission. Similarly, other electoral missions have had to play active roles in protection.

Humanitarian field presence

The combined presence in a conflict zone of multiple humanitarian agencies is often far more extensive than that of purely protective missions. Humanitarians are also often present where there are no explicit monitoring or protection missions at all. Humanitarian protection has already been the subject of significant research, consultation, publication and field experience.[2] Each humanitarian organisation needs to sustain its non-partisanship and its access to victims, while still taking advantage of its protective capacity. Most humanitarians in the field do not want to be silent witnesses. They want their presence to protect, even if that is not their primary mandate. Many of those interviewed for this study cited countless examples of direct and indirect protection achieved by these missions.

A humanitarian agency has particular latitude when it is increasing the protective impact of its own operations and limiting the protection damage of those operations. It can play a demanding advocacy role, insisting to other actors that its programmes be safe and secure and free of risks to civilians.

Beyond specific humanitarian programmes, there are a variety of protection problems linked to an assistance mandate, which give an agency a reasonable justification for an active protection role. Agencies will need to decide for themselves how far they can go, taking into account their own capacities, and possible risks to their assistance work. This manual encourages them to consider going outside the immediate areas of programmatic operations, in order to increase civilian protection.

Complementarity and collaboration

A field mission is seldom a stand-alone player. Ideally, in a conflict zone with many international actors present, there will be a unified approach to protection, in which

each agency includes protection within its mandate, factors protection concerns into each of its operations, and understands how it can contribute to a broader strategy. Institutions with different mandates need to develop their own approaches to protection – some will be direct, with a role of investigation and even denunciation, while others will be more subtle, allowing them to contribute in ways that do not jeopardise their other humanitarian mandates. Co-ordination should help different agencies to develop approaches that are complementary rather than either competitive or contradictory.

Even when there are institutions present with explicit mandates to engage in protection advocacy, their capacity to respond is often insufficient. Each UN country team as a whole needs to co-operate to find solutions to joint problems, in collaboration with NGOs and the international community overall. When the scale of humanitarian agencies' operations increases, their political weight carries with it an obligation of active participation, including collaboration in joint efforts and independent protection advocacy. This includes sharing information, joint analysis and assessment, sharing resources and responsibility for advocacy, supporting institutions mandated to play more active protection roles, facilitating each other's access to regions and populations, and defending each other against threats and attacks.

Unfortunately, turf-battling, inter-agency criticism, and semi-public de-legitimisation of other institutions' actions remain common. This lack of unity limits the positive implementation of joint protection strategies. But what is seldom recognised is that this contagious problem of inter-agency squabbling is a protection and security problem in itself. It makes every international field worker less secure, because the message projected to anyone wanting to attack the international presence is that the weaker parts of the system may not be supported by the stronger ones. It is an open invitation to divide and conquer. International institutions need to develop internal mechanisms to encourage a positive attitude to collaboration. There should be some discipline and accountability for behaviour and statements that de-legitimise and weaken other institutional allies, and also rewards and incentives for productive, collaborative work.

The international legal framework

International legal standards provide a solid grounding for the various protection activities that might be undertaken by field missions. International humanitarian law (IHL) and guidance deriving from international human-rights law set clear and reasonably precise rules on what is permissible in terms of the treatment of civilians, and areas where individuals must be free to exercise their rights. Rules exist to define everything from the conditions of detention to the limits of free speech, not to mention all the detailed law concerning the conduct of hostilities.

In the past, there were considerable doctrinal debates concerning the appropriate circumstances for the application of either IHL or human-rights law, and some sense of contrasting realms of legal protection. Today it is refreshing to see that, after much field experience, most field missions find practical ways to use both sets of legal standards in complementary ways, playing to the strengths of each.

This book makes only passing reference to international legal standards, but our starting point is, of course, that international action to protect civilians should be based in law. International law is a source of standards and objectives for the framing of a mission's rules of engagement and entry agreements, and it can be used as credible and legitimate grounds for pressure to change behaviour harmful to civilians. If we do not deal here with law in greater depth, it is because there are numerous other resources in this field to draw on.[3] Further, research for this manual found little to suggest that gaps in the law form obstacles to protection.

Methodology, terminology and scope

Methodology: research and interviews

The research for this manual, described in detail in the Annex, involved in-depth interviews with over 250 people, including field officers in all missions listed in Table 1.1, as well as representatives of government, the military, armed groups and civil society in the conflicts studied. The field missions discussed here take many forms, but they share the characteristic of being internationally staffed and deployed with the objective of using their presence to improve, among other things, the protection of civilians.

Terminology used in this manual

This manual will, for convenience, use the terms 'mission', 'presence', 'field mission', and 'field presence' interchangeably to refer to all the different kinds of institutional field presence regardless of whether they use the same terms in their own self-identification. We also refer to practitioners on the ground as 'field workers,' 'field personnel' or 'field officers', although we know that in each institution they have different titles. We have chosen this general approach in our terminology in order to appeal to the widest range of institutional audiences.

Given the wide range of conflicts, we have also had to choose terms for the various actors. We use 'perpetrator' or 'abuser' broadly to refer to any institution or individual actively involved in harming civilians, or with the potential or motivation to do so– in other words those who we need to protect against. We use 'armed group' to refer to those rebels, insurgents, etc., who are entirely independent of state

Table 1.1: International missions studied and visited during research for this manual

Country	Institution(s)/mission	Dates studied	Comments
El Salvador	United Nations (UN)/ ONUSAL (UN Mission to El Salvador)	1991 pre-ceasefire	Both missions established under a negotiated human-rights accord between the corresponding government and armed group prior to a final peace agreement or ceasefire.
Guatemala	UN/ MINUGUA (UN Mission to Guatemala)	1994–97 pre-ceasefire	
Haiti	United Nations (UN) and Organization of American States (OAS)/ MICIVIH (International Civilian Mission in Haiti)	1993–94	Established to monitor human-rights abuses under a military government after a coup d'état.
Rwanda	OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights)/ HRFOR (Human Rights Mission for Rwanda)	1994–97	Post-genocide human rights presence during continued armed conflict.
Former Republic of Yugoslavia/ Province of Kosovo	OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe)/ KVM (Kosovo Verification Mission)	October 1998 – March 1999	Verification of a cease fire, prior to NATO bombing campaign.
East Timor	UN/ UNAMET (UN Assistance Mission to East Timor)	May– September 1999	Electoral monitoring and facilitation of the popular consultation on autonomy/ independence.
Field visits Colombia (February, 2005)	Primary focus on OHCHR. Secondary focus: ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees), PBI (Peace Brigades International)	1995–2005	Human-rights monitoring and reporting since the mid-1990s with gradually expanding field presence.

Table 1.1: Cont.

Country	Institution(s)/mission	Dates studied	Comments
Field visits			
Darfur, Sudan (October, 2005)	United Nations Humanitarian Agencies and Peacekeeping Mission/ UNMIS (UN Mission in Sudan)	2003–05	Multi-institutional humanitarian and political presence.
Sri Lanka (December, 2005)	Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Finland/ SLMM (Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission)	2002–06	Ceasefire monitoring presence established under 2002 accord between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam).

control, whereas 'paramilitary' refers to unofficial armed bodies under state influence or control.

We have chosen to study interventions of a primarily non-military nature – hence the frequent use of 'unarmed missions'. This phrase implies no judgement regarding the efficacy or importance of armed peacekeeping missions, but rather that we wish to fill a crucial gap in the existing literature. There has been considerable study of armed peacekeeping, but very little has been done to explain the protective impact of unarmed missions. We recognise also that there are many cases of mixed or combined initiatives – armed and unarmed – and the conclusions here may assist in guiding those efforts too.

The scope and structure of this manual

This manual outlines effective strategies and tactics for maximising the protection of civilians; it addresses significant obstacles to protection, and lays out the institutional and organisational requirements for implementing effective protective missions. The general strategies here are relevant to protection efforts for all vulnerable groups in conflict areas. Therefore, this approach does not provide specific advice tailored to particular vulnerable groups such as children, internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees. The tools here must be adapted to each context, but the fundamental ideas remain the same.

Nor does this book attempt to replace other important resources about many of the activities described. Rather, it calls attention to complementary resources, and tries to put each into context. Several resource boxes are included in the text, presenting selected key sources on relevant topics.

The rest of this manual is in three parts. In Part I, Chapter 2 provides an analytical framework explaining the protective impact of field presence and presenting evidence for the sensitivity of governments and armed groups to such presence. Chapter 3 discusses the need to build protection strategies based on thorough processes of information-gathering and analysis.

Part II consists of five chapters on concrete protection strategies that international organisations, NGOs and governments can apply. These are: sustained multi-level diplomacy (Chapter 4), conscious visibility (Chapter 5), active encouragement and empowerment (Chapter 6), bridging and convening mechanisms bringing parties together (Chapter 7) and public advocacy (Chapter 8).

In Part III, on challenges to effective unarmed protection, Chapter 9 looks in detail at the need to avoid negative impacts while carrying out positive protection strategies, including avoiding the risk of reprisals against civilian contacts. Chapter 10 looks at the challenge of mission security. Institutional challenges and the steps necessary to enable this kind of protection are outlined in Chapter 11.

Chapter 12 presents some concluding thoughts, and the book ends with a detailed bibliography and a note on the methodology used in the research process.

A comprehensive and positive approach

This manual has deliberately taken a positive approach. Drawing on a wide range of experience including not only successes but also very serious errors, we have concluded that these tools of proactive presence need more support and development. We are not singling out individuals, missions or institutions to evaluate and judge past experience, but we are acutely interested in learning from all these experiences – be they successes or failures – to distil learning and best practice. We have opted to present the majority of these lessons and recommendations through positive experiences and examples. This does not mean we are unaware of the many problems.

Interview responses, unsurprisingly, included well-founded criticisms of individual and institutional failures, including incompetence, lack of training, dangerous errors, breaches of ethics, political manipulation, political cowardice and much more. These experiences have contributed significantly to the manual, even if we have not dissected them all publicly. Overall, though, we conclude that these failings do not contradict the promise and potential of the protective tools of field presence. In the few cases where we do call attention to a specific problematic experience, it is only with the intention of pointing the way forward.

This positive approach is not naive. We make no claim that unarmed field presence will always be enough, or will always be the right choice when civilian lives are threatened. And the specific chapters below on tools and strategies unequivocally argue that presence alone is not enough: it matters what you do with the presence. This manual is intended to help each mission to make these choices.

PART ONE
BEING THERE AND BEING STRATEGIC

2

WHEN FIELD PRESENCE PROTECTS
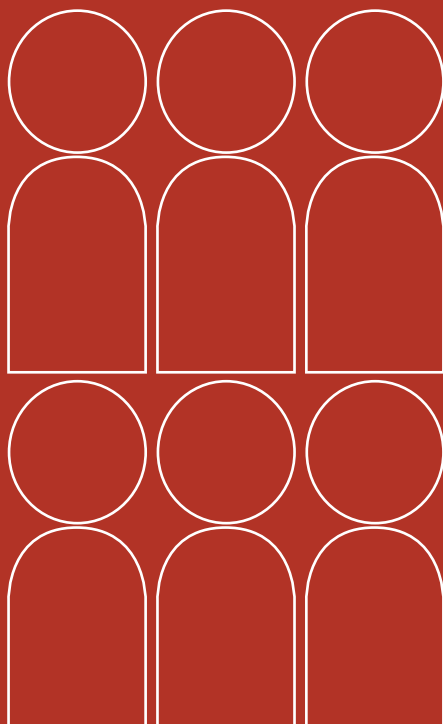
How do we stop abuses against civilians? This manual focuses on *proactive* protection: actions and strategies that deter or dissuade against abuses, persuade abusers to behave differently, strengthen or expand civilian capacity for self-protection, and foster institutional reform. In some cases proactive presence can even influence the dynamics of conflict or other structures that promote abuse of civilians, thus preventing or protecting against future victimisation.[4]

This chapter explains why such an approach is necessary. It lays out a framework for understanding the multi-faceted impact of proactive presence, analyses the mechanisms which make it effective and summarises some of the research results that prove its effectiveness.

Need for local presence

People have many mechanisms for self-protection, and the state itself has a fundamental legal responsibility to protect. When these efforts do not produce an outcome of true protection, the international community can and must help. However, international response strategies often have limited impact because they are mainly directed at top-level decision makers. The international community applies incentives or threats from outside the conflict to persuade or deter governments or armed-group leaderships to cease the abuse of civilians (Figure 2.1).

International pressure is important, but often insufficient. Systemic abuses are a product of the collaboration of a variety of actors at many levels, all of which need to be influenced. The words spoken at the UN Security Council need to be translated into direct pressure and action on the ground by diplomats, embassies, donor agencies and others. The pressure reaching a state or armed group must go down the chain of command.

Figure 2.1: Without presence: international pressure focuses only on top-level decision makers.

Decision makers

International pressure

Chain of command

Perpetrator

Targeted civilians
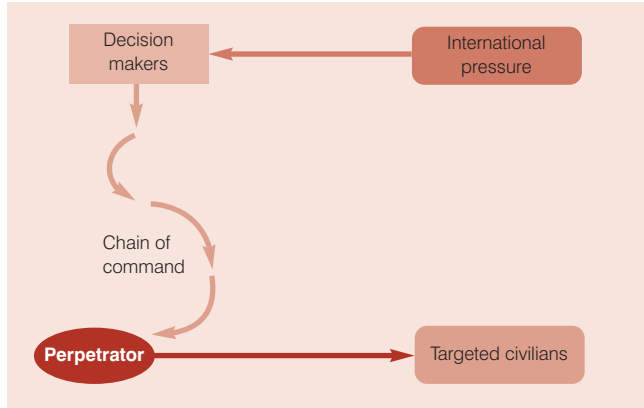
Unfortunately, the transmission of top-level international pressure is highly uncertain. States and armed groups have developed nimble counter-measures to side-step pressure. This is illustrated in Figure 2.2. Decision makers deflect and undermine pressure, using propaganda to destroy the legitimacy of accusing organisations, isolating and stigmatising targeted civilian groups or shifting attention to the actions of their enemies. They also develop buffering mechanisms to absorb and co-opt international pressure without overt denials, including the creation of state agencies to deal with international concerns. This ploy allows the state to claim that it is taking all possible measures. Non-state armed groups also create such buffers,

Figure 2.2:

Decision makers evade international pressure and obscure accountability

Decision makers

Deflectors and buffers

International pressure

Smokescreens 'It's not really me'

Perpetrator

Targeted civilians
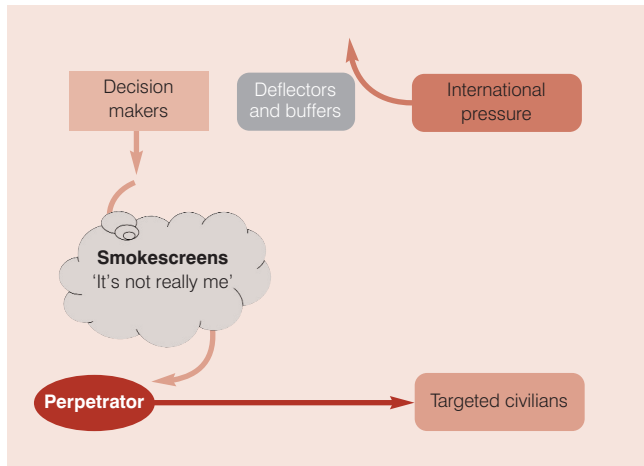
their political wings absorbing international pressure, while their abusing military and intelligence wings remain offstage.

Abuser states and armed groups also create smokescreens to evade responsibility for abuses, even while admitting that they occur. A common and devastatingly effective smokescreen is the use of paramilitary or death-squad operations – often either secretly under military control, or allowed impunity to pursue agendas convenient to the state. In other cases, justifications such as 'lack of discipline' or 'loose cannons' distance the high-level decision makers from the abuses. Banditry and 'accidents' also commonly camouflage political attacks. Smokescreens give both the abusing party and its international allies a level of plausible deniability when faced with accusations. In the face of such counter-measures, international response strategies need to be complemented by more targeted and effective protective action.

As illustrated in Figure 2.3, international field presence strengthens the international response to stop attacks on civilians in three crucial ways.

1 **Targeting the entire chain of command**: International presence projects the visible concern of the international community to the entire chain of command of abuser groups. Field officers interact with all ranks of the military and civilian hierarchy, national and local, ensuring their awareness of international consequences. No other international effort can match a field presence's direct visibility to ground-level perpetrators.
2 **Revealing responsibilities**: Monitoring and investigation on the ground can help reveal relationships of responsibility among armed actors, for instance
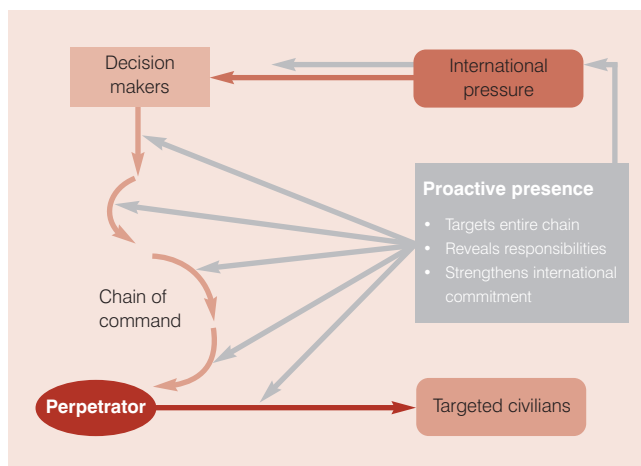
Figure 2.3:
Proactive presence strengthens pressure at all levels

between a state and paramilitaries. This increases accountability and, to some extent, combats counter-measures such as smokescreens.

3   Strengthening international commitment: When an attack or harassment happens *despite* international presence, the international community is likely to react more quickly than if there had been no international presence. Embassies and home governments will engage more forcefully in protection, especially when their own citizens are present in a mission and at risk, adding to pressure on top-level decision makers.

Three key functions of effective presence: deterrence, encouragement and influence

A large field mission can protect proactively in three basic ways, through:

1   deterrence – by constraining abusers from carrying out attacks
2   encouragement – by encouraging civil society's capacity to protect itself
3   influence – by supporting progressive voices inside abusive or negligent institutions and promoting reforms; these reformers can themselves contribute to constraining abuse and encouraging civil society, and can possibly promote longer-term institutional reform to help a government fulfil its protection responsibility.

The following three sections look in more detail at each of these approaches.

Deterrence: constraining abusers

The decision to harm civilians never occurs in a vacuum – choices are always being made. Every decision is affected by a series of calculations and perceptions, whether made by a single individual or many actors in a complicated chain of command. A field mission can influence these decisions by creating circumstances in which perpetrators recalculate the consequences and make a different choice. And every interaction between field officers and potential abusers – state or armed group – is an opportunity for influence.

> 'If a community is completely abandoned, the political cost of abusing someone's rights there is nil. If a local official denounces the abuse, the cost is a little higher. But if the international community makes it presence directly known there, the perceived cost is that much higher. It doesn't eliminate the risk, but it lowers the probability of the abuse.'
>
> OHCHR field officer in Colombia

Figure 2.4: The political space for abusers' actions
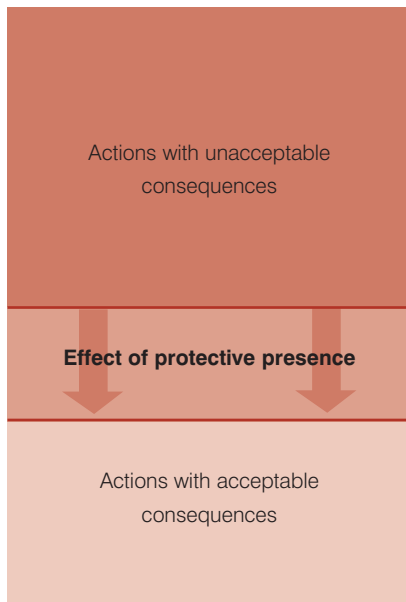
Figure 2.5: Presence reduces the political space for actions acceptable to abusers

A graphic model, based on the concept of political space, can help to explain how a field mission constrains the behaviour of abusers.[5] In a complex situation of conflict, soldiers, government officials or members of armed groups consider a broad array of possible political or military actions. Each action results in certain consequences, or costs and benefits. The actors perceive some consequences as acceptable, some as not acceptable, and thus define for themselves the limits of a distinct political space (Figure 2.4). 'Acceptable' here refers to attacks that perpetrators feel they can carry out with impunity from harsh consequences.

Perpetrators' notions of 'acceptable' consequences can be fluid over time, and will vary greatly among individuals and organisations. Some may be aware of the complex costs of attacking civilians, and go out of their way to prevent them, while others may be more attuned to other dynamics. Usually, perpetrators have interests and motivations for being sensitive to international presence. Effective international presence plays on all of these interests and motivations, reducing the amount of abusive actions that remain acceptable to the abuser (Figure 2.5).

The mechanisms of leveraging international pressure on state actors are widely understood. Civilian and military state actors are concerned with their reputation among other states, and the impact of this reputation on a vast array of political and economic benefits they desire from the rest of the world. Leaders and politicians are anxious, emotionally and politically, for their personal reputations. And often they are concerned for their reputation within the civilian population; since the population may respect and need the international presence, the state may in turn have to be responsive to this popular concern.

What is less commonly assumed, but equally important to recognise, is that armed groups and paramilitary organisations are also sensitive to international concerns. All parties are likely to be concerned if international pressure can cut off their access to goods, money, political support, weapons or other key resources. Most are sophisticated enough to recognise that their international reputation can affect this access to resources. And there is some evidence of growing concern about the risk of international prosecution for serious crimes. Box 2.1 features key factors contributing to the sensitivities of paramilitaries and armed groups with respect to international presence.

> '' 'In Catatumbo, we did a visit accompanied by Peace Brigades International. We were stopped at a paramilitary roadblock. PBI made phone calls and the paramilitaries made phone calls and they let us through. The paramilitaries respect international presence… they are trying to institutionalise themselves legally. The collaboration with the state is very clear… The paramilitaries are steadily occupying government positions, and this makes the situation more delicate for them.'
>
> Colombian human-rights lawyer

Box 2.1: Interests of armed groups and paramilitaries that promote deterrence

Armed groups opposing the state

● Independent armed groups have international strategies and international reputations. The KLA strategy in Kosovo, for instance, was entirely based on internationalising the conflict by building alliances. The FMLN in El Salvador and the URNG in Guatemala readily discussed their human-rights behaviour with the international community, and always hoped to sustain a good international image.

Box 2.1: Cont.

- Armed groups seek to minimise the discrepancy between the popular legitimacy they claim and their own behaviour towards the population.
- These groups receive support from other states or from diaspora communities, both of whom can be influenced by international pressure. The LTTE, for example, desires to keep liaison offices functioning in Western capitals for both political and fundraising purposes.
- Armed groups run, or benefit from, multimillion-dollar international businesses, whose operations can be interrupted or obstructed by state policies. The FARC in Colombia was affected, for instance, by US drug policies, as were West African guerrilla movements by international diamond-trade regulations.
- Their reputation for abusing or respecting civilians can facilitate or hinder the access their enemy (the state) has to military and economic aid. The worse a rebel group behaves, the easier it is for external governments to justify support to the state, economically and militarily.
- Ideological alliances can promote sensitivity. The ELN in Colombia, for instance, has roots in the Catholic Church and has explicitly responded to international civilian protection concerns and Church mediation – for instance, by voluntarily foregoing the use of anti-personnel mines.
- Ongoing negotiations often bring benefits to armed groups, and abusive behaviour can threaten such processes.

Paramilitary groups influenced by or allied with the state

- Paramilitary groups also share concerns for their reputation, popular legitimacy, and economic interests.
- In addition, paramilitary groups are influenced by state support, whether tacit or direct, and are therefore sensitive to many of the same pressures as states. For instance, groups such as the FRAPH in Haiti, the civilian patrols in Guatemala, the pro-autonomy militias in East Timor, the *auto-defensas* in Colombia or the *Janjaweed* in Darfur were all reachable by international pressure channeled through the state, even in cases of purported 'autonomy'.
- Paramilitary leaders often have future mainstream political ambitions, adding to concerns about legitimacy.
- Paramilitary groups often benefit directly from international military aid to their state supporters, and they may not wish to endanger this flow of support by damaging the national reputation.
- In transitional situations, paramilitaries fear that the state may turn on them in a search for scapegoats to prosecute.

In addition to these leadership-level sensitivities, there are also reasons for middle- and lower-rank perpetrators of any armed party to pay attention to international presence. In a disciplined structure, there may be orders or less direct messages transmitting global concerns from the top down and exerting control over behaviour in the presence of foreigners. Even without overt orders, middle- and low-level agents tend to fear any steps that might not be approved by their superiors or might in any way get them into trouble. An international presence is often a new and unknown factor for these local agents; it creates uncertainty, causing them to inhibit their behaviour. In addition, if for reasons of class, social standing, culture, profession or rank they perceive the international observer to have comparably higher status than themselves, this creates a further inhibition.

Despite these many sensitivities, however, there will still be repressive actions with consequences acceptable to the abuser. The Rwandan government after the genocide, for instance, was far more worried about ongoing insurgency than about international opinion, and did not pay much of a price for some of its abuses against civilians. The LTTE in Sri Lanka, apparently for military reasons, kept recruiting children despite consistently high levels of international rebuke and local international presence, and kept assassinating Tamil dissidents even when the victims had explicitly built connections with the international community for protection.

The impact of international presence, therefore, is incremental, not total. Even if presence fails to deter immediately, however, it may in time reduce perpetrators' perceived political space. International presence moves the border between acceptable and unacceptable action, and thus provides real protection.

The crucial role of perceptions

But no one knows exactly where those borders are! This ever-present uncertainty can actually increase the impact of international presence. Each actor is guessing about the possible repercussions of their choices, taking calculated risks and making mistakes (Figure 2.6). Perpetrators base their decisions on their own perceptions and estimates of what consequences they might suffer. Lacking certainty about future outcomes, they may base these estimates on a fairly realistic analysis, simple

> 'Serbian military tanks were terrorising an Albanian Kosovar village with regular tank bombardments. The Kosovo Verification Mission placed a bright orange vehicle and personnel visibly in the town square, 24 hours a day. The bombardments stopped. The tanks pulled away.'
>
> Kosovo Mission verifier
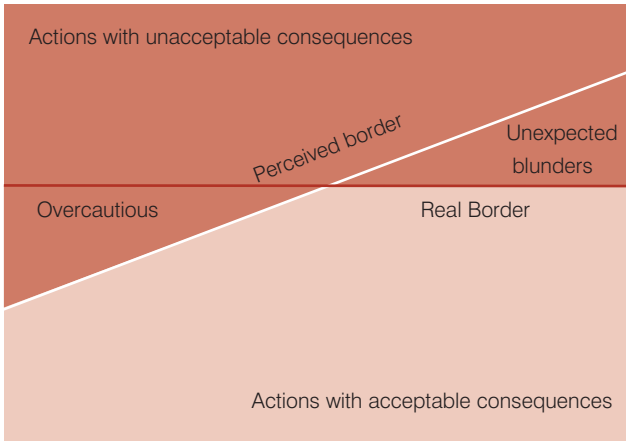
Figure 2.6:
Abusers' political space – real and perceived
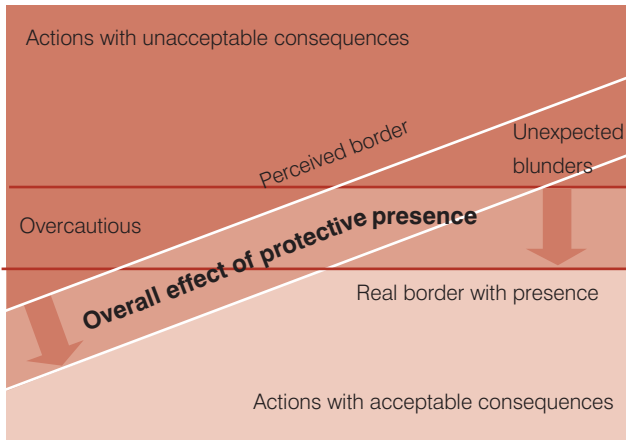
Figure 2.7:
Presence reduces the overall space for abuse

prejudice, a reactive attempt to avoid repeating past mistakes – or any number of other psychological factors. They learn by trial and error, and the errors are costly. Increased uncertainty and unpredictability are fundamental characteristics of conflict.[6] The arrival of an international mission in the conflict zone shrinks both the real and perceived range of acceptable attacks against civilians (Figure 2.7).

An international field presence can guarantee costly consequences of some attacks. At best, the abuser will accurately foresee this cost and refrain from attacking civilians. Sri Lankan Army officials, for instance, affirmed that their men worry about being observed misbehaving in front of SLMM monitors, and most other observers concurred that the army had been very well-behaved since the monitors' arrival. Or, in contrast, the abuser may miscalculate, make a blunder and

pay a cost. In Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, for example, the army might have prevented a 1994 massacre of recently returned refugees had it known that the subsequent outcry would force a defence minister's resignation and speed calls for military reform.

One UNAMET field officer described how the arrival of the international mission in East Timor affected different members of the Indonesian military – each reacting according to their own calculations of the influence of the mission on their political space:

> 'They [the Indonesian military] had always had the luxury of going unobserved. No monitoring. No reporting. Now everything was different – everything would be known. It could get them into trouble. Some were genuinely worried. Others still knew that they could get away with it.'
>
> UNAMET field officer

The moral authority a mission represents can also inhibit abusive action. Morality is one of the factors considered in any calculation of choices. Human beings generally want to believe themselves to be honourable. People committing acts of violence will usually seek ways to do so without being observed and without being blamed. If a presence can raise moral doubts, this can inhibit attacks

Sometimes, the international presence protects by 'helping' the abuser to avoid mistakes – because the mission can overtly warn against a blunder. Consider this incident before the East Timor consultation, where the threat of political embarrassment prompted positive state action:

> 'To me one incident epitomises it all. The consultation was scheduled for Monday August 30. On Friday, Memmo had been burnt down. We had 800 nervous students. On Saturday the Indonesian Chief of Intelligence came to Maliana as a response to all the mayday signs. We met with the highest level. I showed the generals the burnt villages and I gave them an ultimatum: "'We will not run the consultation in this region unless: (a) you return and attend a reconciliation meeting; (b) you do an information campaign. We will not run it unless you agree. Then the whole world spotlight will be on Maliana"… On Sunday the Bupati [local leader] convened the meeting we had demanded. And they went around with loudspeakers…It all came down to street sense. We had some degree of leverage. They knew they had to react fast. They did not want a "no consultation" to put a spotlight on this particular area.'
>
> UNAMET political officer, East Timor

Factors complicating deterrence

Several different factors can limit the deterring impact of a presence, and must be considered carefully in a mission's analysis (Box 2.2). These factors diminish but do not eliminate the protective impact of the field presence. Therefore, international presence will not always be sufficient to reverse policies of abuse in the short run.

Box 2.2: Factors complicating the impact of deterrence

- A poor chain of command cannot communicate pressure efficiently to agents on the ground.
- Key players, for reasons of education or specific political analysis, may not share the values or make the calculations the international community expects or hopes for.
- Schisms and power struggles in an armed or civilian institution can eclipse concerns about external consequences of actions. Divisions in SLM/A, for instance, complicated international humanitarian access to some parts of Darfur in 2005. Turf battles between Colombian paramilitary groups have had devastating civilian consequences. The 2004 split in the LTTE in Sri Lanka led to an upsurge in LTTE attacks on civilians suspected of alliance with the dissident Karuna faction.
- If an armed group has economic self-sufficiency and believes it has funding and weapons to sustain itself at war for a long time, it can afford to worry less about today's international rebuke: its cost–benefit calculation is longer-term.
- Political or military situational changes can also reduce sensitivity. For example, when war became inevitable in Kosovo, Yugoslavian military sensitivity to KVM's monitoring diminished. The Rwandan army was less sensitive to HRFOR monitoring whenever it faced increasing insurgency.
- States and armed parties can develop counter-strategies to neutralise the effect of international pressure or undermine the legitimacy of a mission over time. They may be studying carefully external international pressure as well as field behaviour, and calibrating their own responses to manipulate the international community.
- International actors send mixed messages, sometimes saying one thing in public and another behind closed doors, and perhaps continuing to deliver arms or development aid to abusers, or maintaining silence in the face of serious ongoing abuses. These ambivalent or contradictory messages call into question the strength of the international reaction that a mission can threaten to mobilise.

In Haiti in 1993, MICIVIH could not persuade General Cedras to allow the return of President Aristide, nor to stop his crackdown on civilian activists. HRFOR did not persuade the Rwandan army to hold back from retaliatory action against accused insurgents, with great civilian cost. The international presence in Colombia or Darfur did not reverse two of the worst displacement crises worldwide.

Nevertheless, the deterrence of proactive presence has a positive effect in most cases. Every mission needs strategies to take advantage of the concerns felt by armed actors regarding international pressure. If those strategies also take into account the potential complicating factors, they can effectively find ways to change the behaviour of perpetrators and protect civilians.

Encouragement: supporting civilians protecting themselves

Protection is also about empowering people to organise to protect themselves. Civilian integrity and human rights are most readily respected, protected and fulfilled when people and communities are strong enough to assert and claim their rights. In essence, people are their own best protectors. In most situations they seek peaceful solutions to the challenge of self-preservation, but the pressures of violence and repression close off their opportunities for developing those solutions. An international field presence can encourage and strengthen local unarmed strategies.

Civilians also make choices, according to the political space available to them. They too consider a broad array of possible political actions to which they attribute acceptable or unacceptable consequences (Figure 2.8). Their notion of acceptable consequences can change depending on the individual or organisation, and over time. For some civilians, torture, or the death of a family member might be the most unbearable consequence. For others, just the threat of this would be unacceptable. An organisation might be willing to risk the death of a member, but not the annihilation of the whole group. Some communities will choose displacement as a result of certain threats, while other communities will resist for longer.

Effective international presence increases civilians' range of action in diverse ways. Some communities who stayed on their lands in war zones, for instance, have asserted that without international presence, they would have chosen to leave their homes. For a public servant in Colombia, working honestly for the rule of law may be risky to both life and reputation, but doing this side by side with a UN partner is less threatening. Nevertheless, even with such encouragement there will still be choices resulting in unacceptable consequences (Figure 2.9).
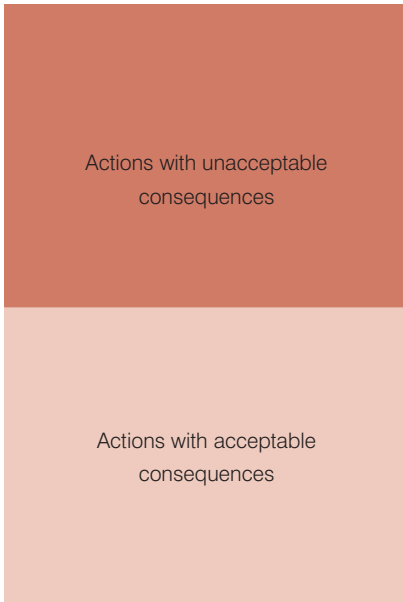
Figure 2.8: Political space for civilian action
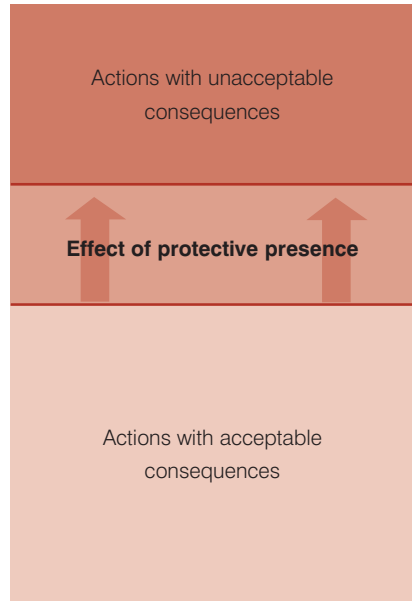
Figure 2.9: International presence increases space for civilian action

Civilians, like other decision makers, face uncertainty about which actions might or might not be acceptable (Figure 2.10). People base their decisions on their own perceptions and estimates of what consequences they might suffer. Lacking certainty about future outcomes, they may base these estimates on a sophisticated analysis, an emotional reaction to a past trauma or any number of other psychological factors.

As a result of this uncertainty, civilians may do things they think are safe, but then get hurt – they walk into unexpected danger. For example, a young factory worker in Colombia may consider it too dangerous to be an outspoken union leader, deciding that it is safer to be just a quiet, rank-and-file member; but then she is killed anyway. On the other hand, civilians also choose not to do things that in reality would have acceptable consequences: they experience inhibition because fear has been instilled so effectively. At a different factory, for instance, workers may be too scared even to talk about unionising; yet perhaps there would be no reper-

Figure 2.10: Real and perceived space for civilian action

Actions with unacceptable consequences

Perceived border

Danger

Inhibition

Real Border

Actions with acceptable consequences
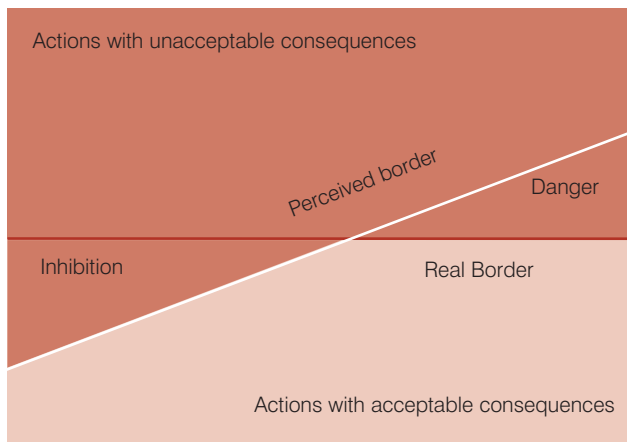
cussions at all. Inhibition is especially strong in situations of deliberate authoritarian terrorism, where nearly all political or social action is repressed; only passivity appears to have acceptable consequences.

The key impact of international presence is that it expands both the real and perceived range of acceptable action for civilians (Figure 2.11). The presence lowers the costs of some previously dangerous actions by deterring abuse. It encourages civilians to be less fearful or inhibited, and thus to carry out actions that were not dangerous but were previously *thought* to be dangerous. Nonetheless, the presence cannot remove all risk of mistakes. Some actions are now made relatively safe, though civilians may still exercise caution and not take advantage of this recuperated space. There may be new unexpected dangers: civilians may believe some actions to be safer now, while in fact they are not. They could then walk confidently into new dangers. A mission needs to work with civilians to ensure that the expectations it creates are not unrealistic (see Chapter 9, Do no harm.) If this risk is controlled, the net result of the presence is an expansion of both the security and the range of activity of civilians.

Field presence also counteracts the isolation and stigmatisation that often weakens civilians in the face of threats. The role of a mission as a first-hand witness strengthens the legitimacy of local civilian communities and organisations, adding to the overall international effort to protect them, and thus adds an additional cost to be considered by those who threaten these communities. For civilians, as for perpetrators, the impact of international presence is incremental, not total. But if the ability to attack has been limited, then presence is a real protection. If civilians can carry out significant political activities that they would otherwise have avoided, then the presence has encouraged non-violent civil society.
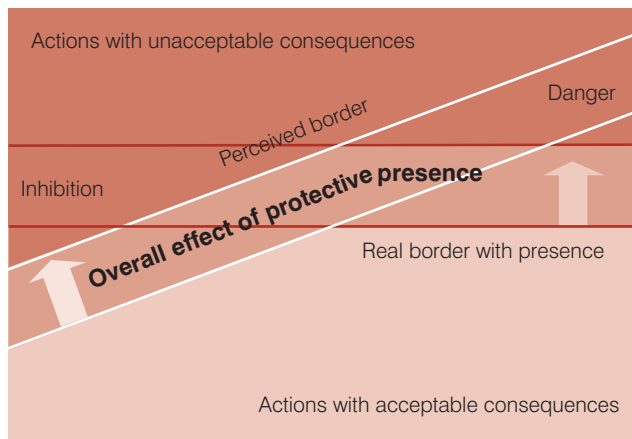
Figure 2.11:
Presence increases overall space for civilian action

The figure shows:
- Actions with unacceptable consequences
- Danger
- Perceived border
- Inhibition
- Overall effect of protective presence
- Real border with presence
- Actions with acceptable consequences

Influence: Supporting reformers and changing societal attitudes

Policies of abuse are sustained by institutional structures and collective attitudes, within which norms and stereotypes developed to justify those abuses are left unchallenged. An international mission's presence calls these assumptions into question, confronting stigmas and stereotypes, and publicly promoting a message of respect for civilian rights and safety. Through its relationship with the state and armed groups, and through support of legitimate and committed reformers, a field presence pushes state institutions to fulfil their roles, rather than serve as buffers to co-opt pressure.

States and armed groups are neither monolithic nor static, and a field mission is in a unique position to identify and support those forces in each institution that can promote policies of respect for civilians. In a government, an army or an armed group, there are always multiple forces at work: internal conflicts, power struggles and multiple agendas. Institutional behaviour is thus a function of the interplay among multiple actors' calculations and choices. The complex nature of these institutions presents problems as well as opportunities for a field mission's protective impact.

The moral authority of a mission can affect the calculations of people in various parts of a government or societal structure, causing snowball effects. Abuse of civilians is an embarrassment that many would like to ignore, but a visible mission presence does not let them. Meanwhile, when mission staff build personal relationships and overtly encourage individual reformers or promote reform structures, these individuals and structures can alter the internal discourse in a repressive system.

Personal connections create channels for moral pressure with protective influence. These small changes accumulate, and to a certain extent people begin adjusting their choices within this new moral reality. Thus, strengthening voices of reform can slowly shift collective attitudes, making attacks on civilians less acceptable.

The complex political and social composition of large institutions presents a field mission with opportunities for constructively influencing decisions that affect civilians. A field mission can develop relationships with decision makers of all ranks, across the geographic territory and in a variety of professional functions. Its legitimacy and its perceived links to multiple sources of international power give it direct or subtle influence on many fronts.

Most intergovernmental missions are formally placed in a strong position to develop such influential relationships with state institutions, through memoranda of understanding, technical support partnerships, or negotiation processes. While it is crucial to sustain independence and avoid being co-opted, a mission can use these relationships to augment its protection. Institutional allies not only promote institutional change, they also bring moral and political pressure to bear on their colleagues. These allies not only help efforts to protect civilians. They may *need* protection themselves. And strengthening their voices and proposed reforms can slowly shift collective attitudes, making civilian abuse less acceptable.

> 'Even inside of questionable branches of the state, there are positive factors and people at work. You can gain their confidence and reinforce their capacities. Over time you become allies towards a common objective.'
>
> OHCHR field officer, Columbia

Mutually reinforcing impacts

The deterrence, encouragement and influence functions of proactive protection should be mutually reinforcing. The strength of civil society to protect itself is one of the costs that perpetrators have to consider, so when international presence strengthens civilian capacity to respond, this can further inhibit attacks. Likewise, since the fear of attack can be the major inhibitor of civilian organising and reform activity, effective deterrence further increases civilian space and increases opportunities for progressive internal reforms. And the greater the influence and relationships a mission has within a state or armed group, the more points of leverage it should have available for deterrence.

Does it work?

Every field mission studied in the research for this manual had evidence of positive protection results – including deterrence of attacks, encouragement of civilians and influence over institutions. Civilians interviewed were nearly unanimous in asserting that international presence encouraged their capacity to function in a conflict zone. State officials explained how field missions had influenced government behaviour and even helped them to promote reforms or legislation.

Perpetrators are more sensitive than initially assumed

The deterrence impact of international presence on perpetrators is the hardest to measure. It is usually difficult to quantify, or even to prove that an abuse has been prevented, as so many other variables contribute to the behaviour of those posing risks to civilians in conflict. Subjective measurements using individual impressions can also be misleading. For example, time and again during research, field officers seriously underestimated the effect of their mission on civilian security. They often discounted their influence by characterising armed parties in specific conflicts as immune to pressure, possessing 'total autonomy' or exhibiting 'pure delinquency'. Yet the same respondents would then often share examples demonstrating that these same 'thugs' did indeed respond to international pressure.[7]

Overall, the evidence suggests that there is usually a good deal more sensitivity among abusers than is initially assumed by those unfamiliar with a given conflict or the complex workings of the parties involved. Box 2.3 provides a summary of the effectiveness of proactive protection in the nine cases studied in detail for this book. Armed actors routinely showed that they were factoring international presence into their decisions, and there are numerous examples of explicit reactions of moderated behaviour due to the presence.

The sensitivity of each state and armed group to international presence is of varying intensity, but was evident even in situations in which warring parties did not yet appear to have an incentive to make peace, and where security situations were deteriorating. Their sensitivity can expand or deteriorate over time in a conflict, indicating the need for strategies both to increase influence over time and to defend a mission against counter-strategies intended to weaken its effect. The question, therefore, is not *if* abusers are sensitive to influence, persuasion or pressure, but rather *how* sensitive they are, to what kinds of influence, and what are the appropriate channels of persuasion or leverage.

Box 2.3: Impact of proactive presence in nine conflicts

El Salvador: ONUSAL's presence helped to sustain confidence in the peace process, influencing extreme sectors of both sides to hold back from undermining it. ONUSAL negotiated unprecedented access to the Salvadoran legal system, with staff members actively intervening in numerous cases to ensure protection of due process as well as to confront impunity.

Haiti: The initial arrival of MICIVIH brought an 'aura of international authority' which calmed the violence for a period. Later, even as the security situation deteriorated, staff still intervened successfully on behalf of individuals. The 1994 expulsion of MICIVIH II by the de facto government was seen as proof that the regime saw the presence as inhibiting its range of action.

Guatemala: MINUGUA also had an immediate confidence-building effect for the population and the parties. The regular appearance of MINUGUA personnel on their doorsteps forced local commanders and militias to 'internationalise' their local strategies of control and pay attention, despite decades of impunity. MINUGUA reporting and investigations also brought about notable changes in state behaviour. Local communities made strategic use of the MINUGUA's encouraging presence to prevent harassment by state authorities.

Rwanda: Despite intense state counter-insurgency and the low post-genocide credibility of the international community, HRFOR managed in certain periods to develop a productive dialogue with the government and the military, bringing numerous concerns to their attention and jointly seeking solutions. Rwandan prison officials, despite their suspicions of prisoners as *genocidaires* or as supporters of the *Interhamwe* insurgency, regularly responded to suggestions and requests from HRFOR about prison conditions, or calling for due process for the accused. In some cases HRFOR investigations of abuses prompted prosecutions of military officials. HRFOR observers cite examples of governmental strategies to discredit the mission, as well as the eventual decision of the Rwandan government to expel HRFOR, as further evidence of its sensitivity.

Kosovo: Violence against Albanian Kosovars was much lower during the period of KVM presence than during the preceding period, even though war was imminent. The massive presence influenced Serbian military and police decisions on numerous occasions, including improving treatment of detainees and stopping military harassment.

East Timor: UNAMET staff recount almost daily stories of successful protective intervention using the image and clout of the United Nations to face down and negotiate with local militia leaders and soldiers. There is evidence of military orders telling the militias to moderate their behaviour towards the international personnel, and to carry out most attacks away from their watching eyes. Internal military documents to the regional command would warn of upcoming UN visits with orders like 'Disarm for the duration'. During the period of UNAMET presence before the ballot in East Timor, violence against civilians was much lower than in the preceding months, although of course UNAMET itself was unable to prevent the widespread killing that followed the ballot.[8]

Colombia: Although increasing monitoring has neither statistically lowered overall abuses nor moved the country towards peace, evidence suggests that armed actors are calculating costs and benefits and tailoring their behaviour according to the local presence of foreigners. International presence is widely considered one of the only effective protections available to civilians.

Sri Lanka: The Sri Lankan conflict has been heavily internationalised for decades, and the respect for international presence is shared by the Government of Sri Lanka, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) guerrilla organisation, and the civilian population in general. Despite great frustration with continued ceasefire violations (including many hundreds of attacks and killings of civilians) and with the self-imposed limitations of the mission, respondents all over Sri Lanka concur that the SLMM presence can deter some violence and reduce misbehaviour – and could claim credit for keeping the ceasefire alive.

Darfur: In the Sudan, international pressure led the state to open the Darfur territory to significant international presence in 2004. But the state is very ambivalent, and most international organisations do not feel they are safe from (state-supported) militia and guerrilla attacks outside certain areas. Nevertheless there have been incidents and diplomatic interchanges showing the Sudanese government's responsiveness to international pressure. The international agencies present have also been able to negotiate agreements with the SLM/A (Sudan Liberation Movement/Army). Many in the civilian population assert that the overall international presence has had a calming effect on the conflict and the risk they face.

Creating sensitivity over time

Even in situations where sensitivity is initially limited, field missions can change perceptions and alter political calculations over time – in some cases even incrementally altering the balance of power. When a mission protects voices of dissent or reform, educates abusive parties and promotes an increase in international concern, it is creating new opportunities for leverage that did not exist at first entry. Abusive parties *are* actively trying to measure the changing results of international pressure. A former Guatemalan defence minister, for instance, described his government's attempts to analyse changing dynamics in international pressure:

> 'you have to figure out how to measure the difference between an unimportant chain letter, and a real clamour that's going to affect the international conscience. And that's very difficult to distinguish… You have to watch for when it reaches the level of an inter-governmental problem… If they can penetrate the OAS [Organization of American States] we're screwed, because we're signers of all these covenants and treaties.'[9]

The longer a presence is deployed, the stronger its dissuading effect should be on perpetrators. Initially, perpetrators might commit repressive acts despite the international presence – a failure of deterrence. But if the political response is sufficient, these perpetrators will suffer unacceptable consequences, and over the course of time their perception of 'acceptable' actions will change. The more severe the political cost they pay, the more they will be discouraged from future abuse. So even in situations where sensitivity is initially limited or gradually decreasing, field missions can slow this deterioration and have a positive influence over time.

- In Colombia, the plight of internally displaced people and the need to prevent displacement was forced onto the state's agenda by international attention and by the presence of field staff with displaced communities.
- In both Darfur and Sri Lanka, the pressure of the international community on a local level raised concerns about sexual and gender-based violence to levels that neither the state nor armed groups could ignore.
- Some advocates of child protection in Sri Lanka believe that their constant interaction and dialogue with the LTTE is gradually sensitising the armed group to the problem of child soldiers.
- The effects of the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka opened doors for increased contact and communication between international agencies and the LTTE, and this openness was used to help address questions of protection.

To take full advantage of the potential for increased influence over time, a mission needs to counteract the strategies armed actors will use to weaken it, and should watch for emerging opportunities to increase its impact.

The impact of proactive presence on deeper conflict dynamics

While many examples demonstrate how international presence moderates or diminishes abusive behaviour, it is more difficult to determine whether international presence can also systematically reverse abusive strategies that result from deeper conflict dynamics. Some missions have contributed to ongoing positive transformations that were the result of many supportive political factors. Others could only diminish the damage to civilians in steadily worsening situations.

One of the nine missions studied in detail for this book, UNAMET in East Timor, can lay some claim to a decisive role in ending a conflict and reversing a deep pattern of abuse. The political characteristics of the 1999 Consultation on autonomy were unique, and the reversal was only consolidated with a subsequent military presence – and after terrible violence. But the consultation would never have happened without UNAMET, and might have been cancelled any number of times if UNAMET had not sustained its commitment, despite great risks. UNAMET thus succeeded in protecting a historical process that reversed decades of deadly Indonesian occupation.

But the Indonesian military (TNI) was staunchly independent (and by some accounts xenophobic) and steadfastly opposed to Timorese independence. TNI was committed to a policy of terror right to the end, with its militia leaders making bellicose speeches calling for violence at rallies observed by UNAMET officers. Neither international pressure nor UNAMET's presence convinced TNI and its militias to refrain from massacre and wholesale burning of East Timor after the ballot, ultimately forcing UNAMET to evacuate. But TNI nonetheless showed just enough sensitivity – to its own civilian government, to the international community and to UNAMET – to allow the consultation to be carried out, and was then forced by international pressure to back away from its strategy of destroying the territory, and leave East Timor independent after 25 years of occupation.

> " 'I saw a guy tortured in front of my eyes in Gonaives. They arrested him because we went there and gave a talk on human rights. He got arrested for asking questions. He was taken to a local detention centre. We followed. His hands and feet were tied behind his back. We saw him, but when we got there they shut the door.'
>
> MICIVIH field officer

This leaves us with a complex problem: international presence will *probably* make a positive difference to civilian security in most conflict settings, but it is not a panacea. There is no guarantee that a large unarmed mission can transform a deteriorating conflict into a flowering peace process – far from it.

The model of political space described above in this chapter is also applicable to the mission itself. Each mission makes its own calculations of desired outcomes and acceptable risks, considering security issues, risks of expulsion and limits of resources and political support – each of which constrain the mission's ability to occupy maximal political space. Just like other actors, the mission and its staff will be miscalculating and making mistakes, over- or under-estimating risks, sometimes walking into unexpected danger and often excessively inhibiting its own actions.

If proactive presence builds confidence and speeds progress in a promising transition, or slows abuse in a deteriorating one, civilians are better off in both cases. But whether this is enough to justify a large unarmed presence depends on what the sponsoring institutions or governments hope to achieve with that presence, what value they place on the incremental protection and what costs and security risks the international community is willing to bear to achieve increased protection.

A mission's influence on conflict dynamics must be judged for both its immediate impact and over a longer timeframe, and its strategies must be designed accordingly. All wars eventually end, and all periods of deterioration or stalemate have within them, somewhere, the seeds of change – for better or for worse. An international presence can be judged on the merits of its immediate function of protecting civilians one by one. It should also be measured and planned in terms of its ability to identify, promote and protect societal initiatives that might help to break stalemates or reverse destructive processes by opening paths for change, and in terms of its capacity to increase international pressure and efforts in the same direction.

Key resources on protection

Slim, Hugo and Andrew Bonwick. *Protection. An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies.* London: ALNAP/ODI, 2005.

Caverzasio Giossi, Sylvie. *Strengthening Protection in War: A search for professional standards.* Geneva: ICRC, 2001.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Growing the Sheltering Tree - Protecting Rights Through Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, 2002.

www.ProtectiOnline.org is a webpage of Peace Brigades International's Mainstreaming Protection Programme, and contains numerous sources and links to a wide variety of other protection resources for defenders of human rights, local activists in civil society and international protection missions.

Summary

Field presence is a necessary supplement to other international response strategies to protect civilians because it targets all levels of the chain of command, reveals responsibilities and strengthens international commitment. Field presence can contribute to the protection of civilians in three important ways.

1 **Deterrence**: Every interaction with a field mission should influence the political calculations of the perpetrators in a way that changes their perception of their political room for manoeuvre, and transmits the concerns and political pressures of the international community. Armed institutions, be they states or armed groups, have a wide range of motivations which create varying sensitivities to this international influence.
2 **Encouragement**: Field presence empowers civilians to assert and claim their rights and increases the actions available to them. Both the real deterrence offered by the mission, and the less tangible feelings of safety and solidarity contribute to an expansion of political space for civilian action.
3 **Influencing societal attitudes**: Field presence represents moral authority that can legitimise institutional and societal reforming activity. It also is in a unique position to identify the entry points for reform.

The impact of international field presence varies with changing political contexts, and can be strengthened over time. This study demonstrates these effects in a wide range of conflict contexts, even where security situations were very delicate or deteriorating, or where an armed actor was visibly resistant to influence.

The positive result of proactive protection with international presence can never be dismissed. Every situation, no matter how intractable or apparently hopeless, can benefit from a rigorous analysis of the numerous vulnerabilities to leverage and possible entry points. International institutions have to answer hard questions about what resources they are willing to invest and what risks they are willing to take to offer some level of protection to civilians. When the answers yield a decision to go in with a field mission, presence alone is not enough. Its success will depend on the design and implementation of strategies taking into account the power dynamics and choices that underlie civilian abuse.

3

INFORMATION ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY BUILDING
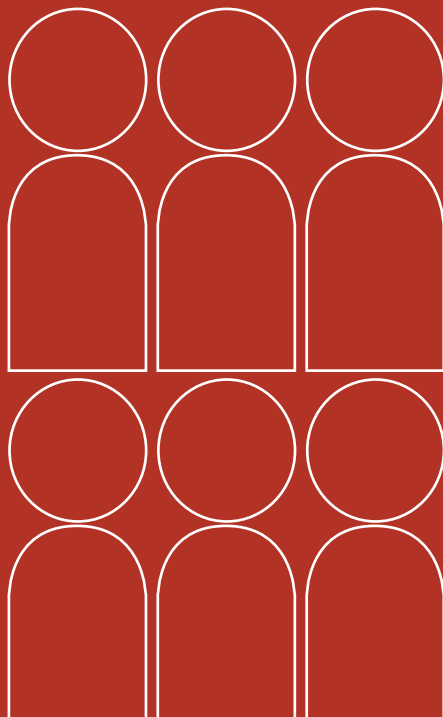
The precondition for any effective protection strategy is a constant process of information-gathering, analysis and strategy building – three interdependent and cyclical processes (Figure 3.1). The information-gathering process informs an analysis, which in turn is used to create or amend a mission strategy. Each amended strategy inevitably raises new questions, demanding additional investigation and analysis. Even an astute strategy will need adjustment to ongoing political changes.

Figure 3.1:
The cycle of information-analysis-strategy

Information gathering

Analysis

Hard choices

Programme and advocacy priorities

Focus, prioritise new information needs
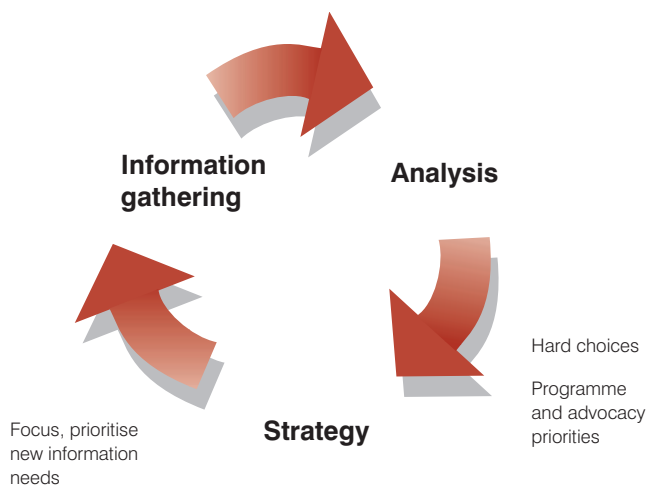
Strategy

Nothing is static – cycle never stops

Hard strategic choices must always be made among countless possible targets of influence or support. Information and analysis help a mission to use its limited resources for maximum protective effect. Each choice in turn refocuses the next round of analysis, as sub-strategies are built for each target.

This may seem obvious, but insufficient political analysis and lack of strategic planning for impact have been a frequent weakness in past field missions. To do it well, the missions need leadership that devotes the necessary resources and time to each part of the cycle, building the necessary networks for information-gathering, investing the necessary time in analysis and ensuring that the mission is equipped with the skills to implement effective strategies.

Gathering information and external analysis

A good human-rights report needs data on abuses, while a good protection analysis also needs information on *abusers*. It needs to be perpetrator-focused, looking at the institutions and people responsible for abuses, and dissecting their chains of command, motivations and objectives. It should articulate the interests driving their decisions, be they military, political, economic, criminal, personal, familial or ethnic. The information needed ranges from an understanding of a broad military strategy of an armed group or state military apparatus, or the international political and economic strategies of a state, down to the local, social relationships of paramilitary gangs in a town. Similarly, to encourage civil society most effectively, the mission must understand the strengths, weaknesses and strategies of civilian groups.

Good information is not just about facts and events. Current facts are good, but the opinions, perceptions and subjective analyses of other parties must also be included, with each source being judged for its validity and wisdom. The process demands a complex network of sources – some public, some confidential. Some missions, unfortunately, have been criticised for being too disconnected from local realities and local actors to develop an accurate analysis of the situation they hoped to change. In contrast, for instance, according to one head of office, UNAMET quickly developed a trusted local network and used it fully.

> 'By the time we got two-thirds of the way through the consultation preparations, we had an excellent information network. The civilian population responded so positively to our presence that we were getting mountains of good and reliable information. Often, I had better information, and quicker, than my government-security counterparts. This was very valuable on an operational level.'
>
> UNAMET head of office

Field missions should draw from a wide variety of sources, including:

- existing protection assessments, including those carried out by local organisations or humanitarian agencies
- victims of abuses, civilians in threatened communities and organisations, witnesses
- local organisations who investigate and analyse abuse and conflict
- trusted government contacts
- formal communication with officials of states, militaries, and armed groups
- confidential sources inside, or close to, armed institutions, including non-state armed groups.
- trusted local analysts who can educate the mission about subtle social and economic factors affecting political decisions
- domestic and external international experts with a long history of analysing the conflict or the relevant national institutions – virtually every conflict terrain in the world has been intensely studied and analysed, but these experts are seldom asked to advise the corresponding field missions
- humanitarian and other international organisations with staff in the conflict zone
- embassy or foreign-ministry contacts with networks and insights about key decision-makers
- negotiators involved in dialogue with the armed parties
- publicly available information such as newspapers, magazines, organisational documents and relevant national websites – this includes, importantly, sources in the local languages, demanding that the mission invests staff time in monitoring and translating relevant sources for analysis.

Information-gathering must be carried out with caution.

- Every source must be evaluated for accuracy, bias and judgement, and not automatically dismissed or accepted. Even a biased source may have important information, and a trusted source may provide a mistaken analysis.
- Mission staff must avoid appearing to be too inquisitive, which could give rise to accusations of spying.
- Where necessary, great care must be taken with confidentiality and protection of sources. (For more information, see Chapter 9, Do no harm.)
- Institutions across the political spectrum will try to manipulate the mission through the information they pass on or withhold.

Informal protection analysis tends to reside only in the heads of individual field officers, and institutions lose vital information if they do not create systems to gather and collate these individual analyses, and pass them on for future planning.

Box 3.1: Collaborative data gathering

It might seem obvious to suggest that multiple institutions should share information and collaborate on data collection and analysis, but this can be challenging in practice. Different institutions, each with their own mechanisms and formats, would need to develop mutually accessible systems of data collection. Data collaboration requires agreed standards of consent and confidentiality that protect people from the misuse of delicate information, but which do not prevent international institutions from using valuable information to protect them. In addition, a collaborative data gathering should not be so onerous as to destroy efficiency or distract agencies from using the data to take action.

In 2004–05 in Darfur, OCHA launched an ambitious attempt to achieve some level of inter-agency co-ordination of protection efforts, developing data-collection formats, organising protection working groups in each region, and trying to develop a system-wide protection strategy. The initial data-format process proved too complicated for most people to use. More importantly, the data collection was not closely linked to advocacy strategies, which weakened motivation to participate. The process was subsequently reconsidered. The protection working groups also got mixed reviews, in part due to excessive expectations of their impact, but also because their deliberations were not systematically linked to subsequent action. Nevertheless, the concept of inter-institutional protection forums for collaboration and sharing at the local level deserves continued development. This could increase the implementation of protection strategies by multiple parties in the same conflict.

Analysis for proactive presence

Protection analysis is political. It is about power and influence, and needs to identify the chain of responsibility for attacks on civilians, mapping out channels for applying sanctions or offering incentives to change behaviour. It should avoid ideological or conspiratorial theories about institutional behaviour, which usually generate naive and incomplete strategies. A subtle analysis of the functioning, motivations and internal organisational realities of abusive institutions can identify points of contact, vulnerabilities to leverage or interests in incentives. Since each institution is unique, so must be the analysis: the channel of influence for the ministry of the interior will be different from that for the army, and so on.

Those who appear impervious to persuasion, the so-called 'hard-liners', should

not be dismissed as unreachable. Sometimes, for instance, even an abusive institution will have reasons to interact constructively with a field mission. Astute military or political leaders sometimes recognise that their subordinates do not always transmit vital information that might result in criticism or discipline, so they may perceive an indirect benefit from the presence of external monitoring of their own agents.

Sometimes institutional behaviour is affected by complex historical, familial or ethnic dynamics, by business competition, corruption or any number of other factors. An analysis has to evaluate the relative importance of the different factors at play in order to identify the most productive strategy, and these factors are seldom purely military. To understand killings in Casanare, Colombia, one needs to know the economic motivations sparked by the local struggles for control over contraband gasoline from Venezuela. To protect in Darfur, analysis must consider the varying motivations and histories of many different ethnic groups and tribes, as well as the role of regional environmental and economic degradation on the conflict. With such local complexities, trusted and skilled national staff can be crucial in developing an accurate analysis.

Conflicts change over time: last year's analysis may not be valid now, but a mission will only know this if it has its finger on the pulse. For instance, the nature of the Darfur conflict changed dramatically in a short time, and if international agencies did not perceive this change, their strategies became obsolete. Likewise in Sri Lanka, strategies all had to be re-analysed after the 2004 tsunami.

The power of a mission deployed over a large area lies partly in its capacity to adjust its strategies to take into account the nuances of local realities. Cultural, social, political and military realities may vary from one region to another. Local governments can be an ally in one province, and an obstacle in the neighbouring one. The transfer of a new commanding officer into the dominant nearby military base can drastically change realities for civilians. When a mission's analysis encompasses these subtle variations, local impact is enhanced, and the cumulative national effect is greater as well.

A field mission must make an equally thorough analysis of the international influences that can be brought to bear when needed, to encourage compliance by abusive parties. This requires an organic connection between the mission, the political leadership of its sponsoring institutions or states, and decision makers in the international community interested in the conflict. Missions with sponsoring institutions lacking these links to power lose opportunities for external pressure strategies. Crucially, such external analysis includes understanding the varying powers of influence of the different diplomatic delegations on the ground – and then using them in the resulting protection strategy. This international analysis must sometimes pay special attention to third-party countries that have a close interest in the conflict, be they regional powers or key economic partners.

Box 3.2: The challenge of analysing non-state armed groups

The legal and political structure of international institutions and the methods of pressure they commonly use are designed primarily to influence governments. They are less well equipped to exploit, or even understand, the sensitivities of independent armed groups. When a mission underestimates the sophistication and sensitivity of armed groups; or when it dismisses the possibility of leverage upon independent groups, it is unlikely to develop the analytical and strategic resources it would need to affect them.

For example, the *Interhamwe* forces that systematically mobilised a population to murder hundreds of thousands of Tutsis in 1994 fled and dispersed across the border to Zaire, and continued to terrorise Rwanda. After the genocide, the *Interhamwe* were considered morally 'beyond the pale', not to mention physically inaccessible. Although some attempt was made to learn from refugees returning from Zaire, HRFOR was in a fundamentally weak position to develop any clear strategies about this armed group's continued influence on protection problems in Rwanda. It lacked information and points of contact, and probably would have faced security risks had it sought them. As a result, some mission staff relied on the oversimplification that the *Interhamwe* had been transformed into disconnected bands of uncontrolled killers, despite their recent roots in such a highly organised genocide. Some field officers feel that this lack of contact weakened the mission's strategic capacity in relation to both the *Interhamwe* and the government.

Groups operating clandestinely do not make intelligence readily available, and direct contact with these groups is sometimes prohibited or dangerous. Nevertheless, there is always information somewhere, and for any conflict of significant duration there will be people who have made a point of understanding how these groups function.[10] A mission must find these people. If it cannot make direct contact, it must use indirect sources – always taking care not to endanger the sources.

Missions in ceasefire or negotiation settings have easier access to non-state armed groups, and their experience invariably confirms that there are many different political sensitivities and points of leverage. Building on its unique legal status and access, the ICRC has developed careful analyses of armed groups, and while it must necessarily maintain due confidentiality in this role, it often can find appropriate ways to advise other missions based on the lessons learned from this privileged access and analysis.

Building a strategy for effective protection

Based on thorough information and analysis, a mission must choose whom to influence and then design a plan to do it. Strategy has to reconcile the analysis with the realistic capacities and resources of the mission, and ask difficult questions.

- What institutions are most pivotal in stopping the greatest number of abuses or altering the most damaging polices? What are the mission's relationships with these institutions?
- Who are the people in these institutions most susceptible to influence? Who has decision-making power?
- What other forces or actors can influence these pivotal institutions? What alliances can the mission build to maximise the combined influence?
- Which crises or situations can most effectively be used to generate pressure on the perpetrators' institutions?
- What security risks need to be taken into account? How do these differ for expatriate and national mission staff? What are the optimal protection roles for both national and expatriate staff in this context?

Protection strategies need to be not only national, but also regional and local – going right down the chain of command. Each target at each level requires a sub-strategy. Locally, relationships are closer and more personal. A mission's contacts with the local bishop or the chamber of commerce, for instance, can have an influence on the mayor or the chief of police. In a regional city, where a mission may be the sole representative of international influence, it may be a more powerful international player than in the capital. Local actors may desire the privileges and status inherent in relationships with influential international actors. This gives local strategies greater flexibility.

Similarly, different strategies have to be developed for supporting civil society.

> 'You have to identify which promising forces, counterparts or factors within in the society could have a multiplier effect if they were strengthened, and use this as a criterion for choosing with whom to work. You can lose a lot of energy working to help a group that later turns out to have no multiplying impact.'
>
> OHCHR field officer, Columbia

A key feature of a complex strategy is the sequencing of activities. For any given problem, the mission needs to look first for the quickest and most efficient inter-

vention or approach to achieve a solution. If this proves insufficient, it may then need to develop additional, more complex steps (Figure 3.2). For instance, if a problem can be solved locally, it need not be addressed nationally or internationally. If a given actor can be influenced through very quiet and subtle persuasion, this can be tried first before escalating the strategy to include stronger persuasion, mobilisation of allies or even public pressure.

> ❝ 'It is important to have a graduated response – to address a violation at the level it was committed. You can give the perpetrator or his immediate superior the possibility to resolve the case at his level, using the threat of raising it above him or of going public as an incentive to act. At the same time you are showing that you are not there to create problems but to find solutions with him, to work with him. The threat of bringing the case to his superior or going public is itself a useful bullet, which can spare the bullet itself.'
>
> Field officer with experience in multiple organisation
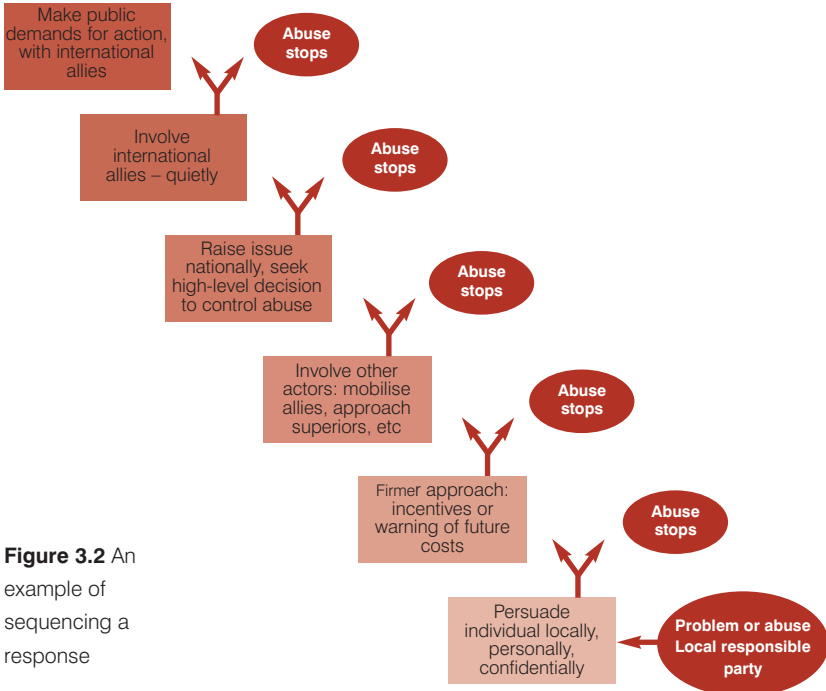
Figure 3.2 An example of sequencing a response

A mission should also calibrate its strategies appropriately to its levels of external political support, the strength of its mandate and its level of resources. The stronger the mandate and political support, the broader the range of tools available for use.

Strategic planning is a skill and an art, which field officers should learn. It is a well-developed discipline with many fine resources available that need not be duplicated here. International institutions that sponsor field protection missions should promote development of this skill among their field officers and management. The head of mission *must* have highly developed strategic management capacity, to enhance everyone else's efforts. This alone is probably not enough, however, because strategic analysis takes time as well as skill, and a head of mission may be too much in demand for other vital organisational or diplomatic tasks to devote enough time to strategic planning. At mission headquarters there should be additional designated people with these political and strategic talents who can really focus time on national strategy development and implementation, and assist each field office in local strategic planning, ensuring a level of coherence and quality control across the mission.

Information gathering

- Gather data on
  - abuser's chain of command
  - abuser's interests (military, economic, international, domestic)
  - strengths and weakness of civilian groups
  - sources of international support or leverage
- Draw on a wide variety of sources
- Be discrete and respect confidentiality
- Account for biases

Analysis

- Understand who is responsible
- Identify channels to influence this individual
- Update analysis constantly as context changes
- Analyse possibilities for international leverage
- Creatively seek channels to understand and influence armed groups

Strategy

- Choose targets (local, national, regional)
- Choose allies or other forces that may influence or exert pressure on them
- Design sub-strategies for each target
- Develop specific strategy for civil society
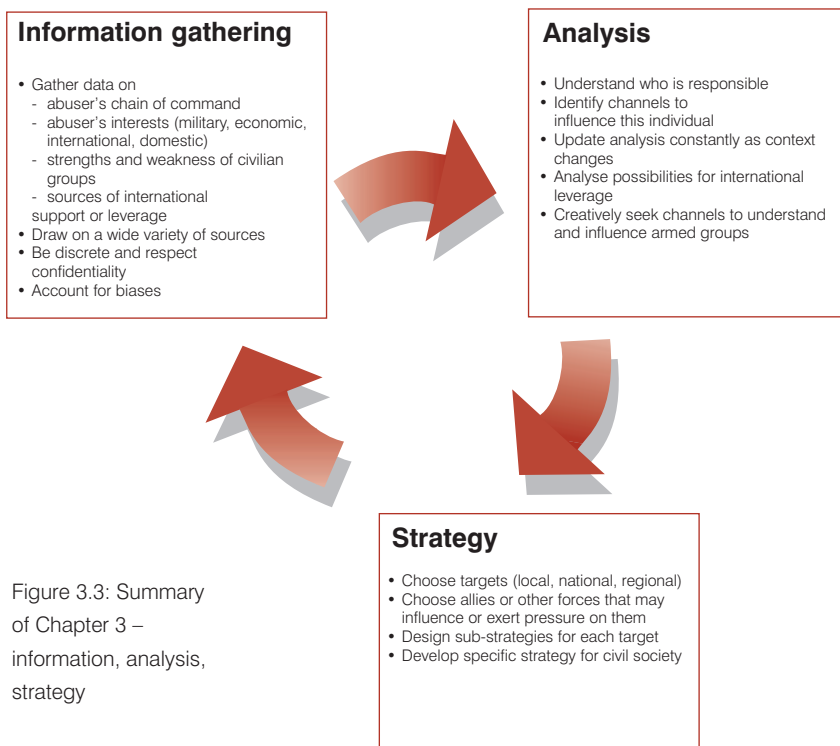
Figure 3.3: Summary of Chapter 3 – information, analysis, strategy

Summary and recommendations

Clear strategies based on informed analysis require a definite organisational commitment.

- A field mission must commit resources and expertise to information gathering and analysis.
- Mission leadership and field staff should be selected on the basis of analytical capacity.
- Institutions deploying field missions should create structures and processes that make such analysis a required step. A mission should not be allowed to proceed without it.
- Analytical and strategic training should involve all of the field staff – so that the personnel making daily political contacts fully understand the strategies their actions must reinforce and promote.
- Outsiders should be brought in to enrich this analysis and strategy building, including people with prior expertise in the terrain – regional political experts and specialised academics – as well as strategic-planning professionals.
- A field mission should develop and maintain a contact network for local analysis. This requires strategies for dealing with bias, security and confidentiality.
- A field mission should enrich its analysis by involving national staff with political expertise in its planning. Such involvement can take into account their potential biases, while still taking advantage of their analysis.
- There should be an explicit effort to gather intelligence about independent armed groups, if such groups are a factor. Whenever possible this should involve direct contact with those groups, which in turn suggests the need for security guidelines and a mandate allowing such contact.

PART TWO
FIVE STRATEGIES OF EFFECTIVE PRESENCE

- Sustained multi-level diplomacy Chapter 4
- Conscious visibility Chapter 5
- Active encouragement Chapter 6
- Convening and bridging Chapter 7
- Public advocacy Chapter 8
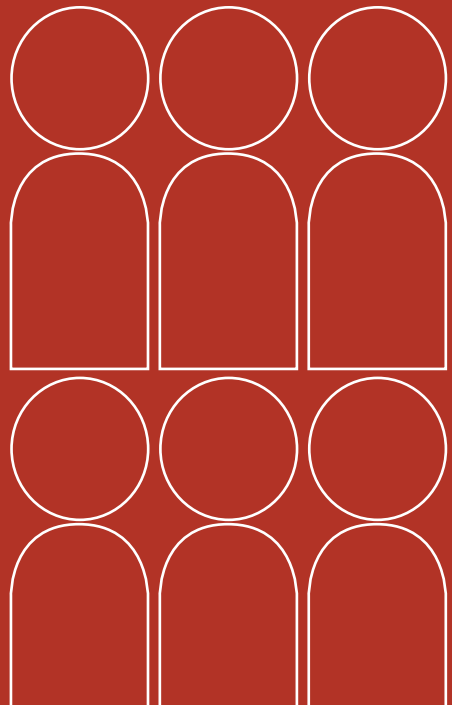- **Protective presence**
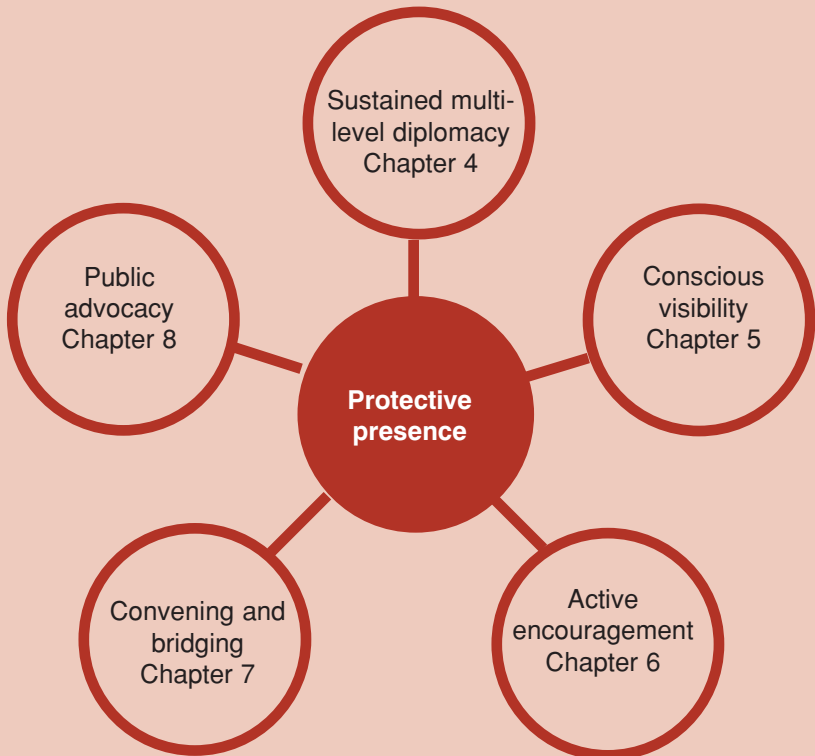
4

SUSTAINED MULTI-LEVEL DIPLOMACY

Once the pre-condition of good information and analysis is met (as described in Chapter 3), the first key protection strategy for a field presence involves diplomatic intervention in daily situations and constant discourse with key political actors nationally and locally. The effect of these interactions is cumulative, and has the power to affect both local and national decision making, reducing abuses and violent conflicts.

Consider an example: if a local commander has orders to carry out a counter-insurgency campaign, he may know that this will involve repression of civilians. But he may not be directly aware of the international community's concern about this. If a report is written about his campaign, and sits in a file or is only discussed in meetings in Geneva or New York, will he even know about it? Will it affect his strategy? Maybe, but very probably not.

But suppose an international mission field officer drops in to this commander's office. Over a congenial cup of coffee, the field officer shares news of the report. He may even visit before the report is written, inviting the commander's input. The commander may now consider that the field mission will also be having this conversation with his superior officers, and their superiors, local business leaders and political figures in parliament, as well as contacts in the local and national media. He may have to engage in local discussions about international humanitarian law, send some of his men to these discussions, and explain the dissonance between this diplomacy and their actual orders. He knows now that after a given military incursion resulting in civilian deaths, he will be visited by a local or national multipartite investigatory commission involving the United Nations, local government officials and local civil-society groups. And he knows that the results of that commission are going to be a headache for his superior officer. Perhaps now he is thinking about the political costs of his actions.

This is just one example of the fundamental potential of a field presence. With the kind of information, analysis and strategy described in the previous chapter, a complex process of contact and communication can be constructed. This should include not only, for example, an offending commander and the military structure that is supposed to discipline him, and not only national governments that are supposed to control their military, but also local community leaders, business leaders, local government authorities and others. Each contact encourages a change in behaviour. The more long-term and constant the presence, and the more relationships that have been constructed with these players, the more this is possible.

The opportunities to influence are everywhere, every day, and a field officer should take advantage of them. When mission personnel are out in public, travelling to remote rural areas, talking to the local mayor or priest or commander, everyone is paying attention and calculating the consequences. And that changes things.

Where there is the political will within a state or armed group to listen, an important communication mechanism can be the use of confidential dialogue and co-operation towards reform. This can influence at not only higher policy-making levels but also further down the chain: at the low or middle level a commander may be afraid of being accountable to his hierarchy, and may prefer to resolve an issue quietly at his own level. According to one field officer with both OHCHR and ICRC experience:

> 'In my experience, engaging even the worst abusers in this manner may yield unexpected results: you give a fellow the choice between solving the issue quietly, among ourselves, based on a gentleman's agreement – or putting him on the line by raising the case with his superiors. Not only may you solve the issue, but you may create a bond of confidence with the fellow, an ally who does not perceive you as an enemy, and who may be useful to solve future cases.'
>
> ICRC protection officer

Sustained contact with local players requires a clear discourse in each case, based on careful analysis of how to influence a particular abuser. This discourse might be as minimal as a formal courtesy visit or introduction, a mention of the field-mission objectives, or expressions of concern about a certain situation. It might involve making explicit requests for better co-operation. When appropriate, it might involve direct or veiled references to carrots and sticks or to international reputation. And in some rare cases it might be effective to criticise candidly and demand action. Every interaction is a political and diplomatic event requiring a strategy and a high level of communication skills.

Unfortunately, in the major missions studied for this book, this strategy of daily

diplomacy is barely noted in training, preparation and strategy building. Mission descriptions, mandates and internal documents do not emphasise it, even though many experienced field officers understand it implicitly. Across the board, there is confusion in practice: field officers interviewed admitted that they got little diplomatic guidance, and they had no idea whether other field officers within their own mission were approaching these interactions in the same way. Some pointed out that the political officers at mission headquarters might not even approve of the various discourse strategies used by individual officers out in the field. And several interviewees felt that to achieve any effective level of local diplomatic intervention, they had to 'break the rules'.

Similarly, there is seldom a clear directive about how much staff time should be devoted to diplomacy.[11] Within the same mission, personnel from one sub-office may be mostly out interacting externally while in another they are mostly at their desks. And if agency or mission personnel think that this sort of local contact is 'someone else's job' or mistakenly believe that the only important advocacy is what happens 'at the top', on a national level, they may not do it at all. Overall, this local diplomacy seems to depend largely on individuals: if they have the skills and choose to use them, it happens, and otherwise the opportunity is lost. Field managers must make the expectations of local diplomacy and networking explicit to all mission staff.

Humanitarian agencies, for example, with their substantial field deployment, have unique opportunities and constraints in carrying out this particular protection role. On the one hand, agencies with a programme emphasis on the provision of assistance or services sometimes face internal hurdles and must overcome institutional resistance and fears surrounding words like 'advocacy'. Research for this book reveals a recurrent tendency to associate the idea of advocacy with a stereotyped image of vocal human-rights denunciations and demarches, and to see this concept also as somehow contrary to some humanitarian institutions' mandates. In fact, as many other humanitarian field officers will attest, diverse types of protection communication are already happening in a wide variety of ways in most humanitarian field operations.

Each institution needs to develop a unique discourse and set of messages linking protection needs to their primary mandate, whether that mandate be assistance, election monitoring or ceasefire support. These messages can draw attention to the causal links between civilian vulnerabilities to conflict and the specific programmatic mandate of the institution. This allows the agency to engage in more active protection advocacy, while still championing its special responsibilities.

Humanitarian agencies in particular often carry a lot of economic and political weight, due to the massive resource they inject into a conflict zone. This power is naturally associated with any protection message they convey, no matter how subtle. Field personnel engaging in local protection communication can take advan-

tage of the unspoken political clout of their agency, which may well be the sole 'face' of the international community in many places.

To uphold mission integrity and sustain relationships with national and military leaders and the diplomatic corps, a field presence needs the highest level of diplomatic political skill in its leadership. The capacity of national authorities to relate to an international mission will vary enormously. Mission leadership needs the versatility to interact with all types of people, always seeking opportunities to further strategies for the protection of civilians.

> **Key resources on negotiation and communication in the field**
>
> Mancini-Griffoli, Deborah, and André Picot. *Humanitarian Negotiation: A handbook for securing access, assistance and protection for civilians*. Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2004.
> LeBaron, Michele. *Communication Tools for Understanding Different Cultures*. Written for the Conflict Research Consortium (available at www.beyondintractability.com).
> McHugh, Gerard and Manuel Bessler. *Humanitarian Negotiation with Armed Groups. A manual for practitioners*. New York: United Nations, 2006.
> Slim, Hugo. *Marketing Humanitarian Space. Argument and method in humanitarian persuasion*. Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2003.

Diplomacy with government and military

> " 'You need fluid channels of communication with your state counterparts. You have to know who to talk to. Maybe you can't resolve everything, but you should at least go to the right place, know who will pay attention and who is going to waste your time… With a good relationship, you can call directly – "What's up with this case?". Without a relationship, you can't.'
>
> Head of sub-office, OHCHR, Colombia

One key long-range objective of a mission is to strengthen a culture of peace and human rights within the host government, and build capacity for civilian protection. This may involve establishing close collaborative relationships in promising situations. But even in situations where the state may be the chief obstacle to protection, and perhaps the primary perpetrator of abuse, a large mission will still benefit from close local and diplomatic relationships with governmental and mili-

tary decision makers at national and local levels. These relationships must be developed carefully to assure maximum access and influence, and yet not allow the host state to manipulate or curtail the mission's independence.

Close governmental relations allow a mission to pressure friendly officials regarding particular cases, situations or political trends. By supporting allies inside the government, the mission can promote reforms in a state structure that is abusing civilians. Thus, the mission is positioned to bring maximal international pressure to bear. Knowing who is who, it can direct this pressure to the right targets, and help others in the international community do the same. Allies inside the government can also be important for mission security, especially if the mission is challenged politically.

A mission must maintain numerous channels of communication with the government to take the fullest advantage of diverse opportunities for persuasion. It must not limit links to only the foreign ministry or a government human-rights body. It needs top-level direct contact with the military, police, the justice system and any ministries that can directly influence the protection of civilians or resolve conflicts that make civilians vulnerable.

A mission's relationship with the government should always be respectful and as transparent as possible, even if the mission is critical of government policies. The mission should make the effort to seek information from the government before taking positions or publishing statements. Concerns should be expressed at the local level before they are pressed at the national level. At the stage at which public statements are appropriate, they should not take the government by surprise and should be consistent with the private representations that have preceded them.

The relationship between a protection mission and a state is often very strained. The state may tolerate the mission, and yet obstruct or undermine its operations with threats, harassment or non-cooperation. Behind such actions exists the ever-present, implicit threat of expulsion. Rather than let such harassment paralyse or silence it, however, a mission needs to meet every accusation, large and small, with a clear and sometimes strong response. It may need to reiterate publicly its neutrality and impartiality, call attention to the damage that accusations against it can cause, and even use international and diplomatic support if necessary to demand due respect.

Diplomacy with armed groups

A field mission should establish contacts and dialogue with all actors who control territory and people, and who have the capacity to harm the mission or the civilians it aims to help. This contact should start by gaining acceptance and respect for the

Relationships with the military can be particularly important, and particularly difficult. When missions have military and security personnel on staff, their common profession sometimes allows them to develop a rapport more easily with local military officials. Missions also have to take special care to avoid errors that are perceived by the military as having damaging military consequences. For instance, missions have been accused of sharing confidential information with rebel groups. Humanitarian agencies and local partners have to avoid inadvertently becoming a logistical support to rebels. And if such groups are stealing or controlling resources against the agency's will, the agency may need to condemn this actively and vocally in order to assure the military that it does not tacitly approve. Also, any advocacy efforts need to respect defensive military sensitivities.[12]

Ceasefire monitoring missions are particularly well placed to develop good relationships with their military counterparts. Representatives of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) met as often as daily with military officials. The Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) held daily liaison meetings with nearly every security body in the government of Serbia. The fact that the KVM officers tended to outrank their Serbian counterparts in these conversations was seen by some as an important diplomatic advantage.

mission as an impartial actor, to protect it against attacks and secure its safe access to civilians. This requires an unbiased approach – a credible political independence in words and deeds. Where such open dialogue is blocked, everything possible must still be done to transmit messages to armed groups – to clarify the mandate of the mission, to augment the security of its personnel and, where possible, to try to influence the behaviour of these groups towards civilians.

ICRC respondents stress the importance of demonstrating a clear understanding of the issues at stake for the group:

> 'The quality of the ICRC presentation depends on knowledge and on points of empathy. For instance, with the FARC, they have had a social agenda. We can empathise with that. You use these points of empathy as a starting point.'

ONUSAL, MINUGUA, SLMM, KVM, and UNAMET all had direct contact with armed groups due to the international negotiations in progress, enabling ongoing communication of protection messages and channels for dealing with other concerns as they arose. Conversely, in Colombia, direct communication with armed groups is legally prohibited for all but the ICRC, making communication by others much more difficult. Nevertheless, in rural areas, most missions have sporadic contact with paramilitaries and guerrillas, particularly at checkpoints on roads, rivers or trails. Even these contacts are opportunities to make a difference.

> "
> 'We have these sorts of discussions at checkpoints with FARC:
> "Look, this guy with you is the cousin of a paramilitary, so we're taking him."
> "You look, he's not anyone's cousin! He works for this organisation and he is my responsibility."
> "We're sure he's his cousin."
> "And I'm sure I'm looking out for him."
> And you realise that if the international staff had not been there to make this argument, the conversation would have been different – "You, you're the cousin, out of the boat!" – and maybe we'd never see that guy again.'
>
> Humanitarian officer, Colombia

In addition, mission staff and civil-society observers alike believe that Colombian armed groups 'have ears' in enough places to get messages. But, outside the ICRC, there is no evidence of any systematic attempt to transmit a coherent message or discourse to these groups, other than through the formal written human-rights reports of the OHCHR mission. (This is discussed further in Chapter 8, Public advocacy.)

Communication with armed groups can be a very delicate matter in the eyes of the dominant state and its military, and security concerns must therefore be considered in such contacts. However, concern for security should not categorically rule out such communication. Security must be dealt with strategically at the operational level, considering also that lack of contact with an armed group may also pose a security risk to the mission.

Controlling bias

Even though our intention through this manual is to advise maximal contact with armed actors and those who influence them, a mission must still be cautious about getting too close. A protective field mission is always subject to accusations of bias,

which have serious consequences in terms of security, the ability to stay in a country and the ability to build the relationships necessary for making an impact. The mission must strive to control the perceptions and accusations of mission bias, and also any real bias that might result from a mission's behaviour, structure, composition or objectives, if it does not adequately guard its commitment to impartiality.

The Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM), for instance, despite the fine work of many conscientious monitors, was perceived by many as too close to the KLA. It was even accused of sharing military intelligence and helping to prepare the way for the subsequent NATO attack. KVM monitors with human-rights experience questioned the way in which the mission publicly exploited a massacre in Racak by jumping to conclusions and rushing to press with accusations against the Yugoslavian government in a manner that a more neutral human-rights mission would never have allowed.

The support for independence was so prevalent among the East Timorese as well as within the international community that it would have been impossible to field a mission without a preponderance of personnel who personally supported independence, so UNAMET was very vulnerable to accusations of bias. When the victims of violence are mostly of one ethnic group in a conflict, such as in Darfur or Sri Lanka, international humanitarian or protective missions will usually have more contact with this group. Assistance or protection to victims based purely on need inevitably associates a mission more with whichever side of a political division has more victims.

A limited mandate, analysis or work plan can also create a bias. If an agency focuses its work on child soldiers, for instance, and only one armed party is using child soldiers, the agency's categorically constrained approach may lead it to understate (or not even investigate) the other kinds of abuses being carried out by the other party. A mission which enters a long-term conflict but focuses solely on monitoring current violations may find itself legitimately accused of bias for ignoring victims of past abuses, since these past abuses (and their victims) may have as much to do with the current conflict as those still being carried out. Standard reporting strategies emphasise current perpetrators, but a mission can also develop restorative strategies that focus on victims, a longer-term approach to societal healing that does not favour current victims over past ones.

A mission can minimise the risks of perceived and real bias by:

- negotiating agreements that allow it access to all population groups and armed parties, and demanding flexibility in its activities and methodologies
- being geographically accessible to all key groups

- taking care that its methodologies and language skills do not implicitly favour or give greater access to one group over another
- ensuring balance in any aspects of mission staffing that might project a signal of bias externally
- protecting its independence from the political agendas of its sponsoring states – this can be difficult but a mission's ability to carry out protection impartially may require it to confront contrary decisions of its own sponsoring institutions or states
- not allowing any mission personnel to pursue intelligence or military functions for their own government
- sustaining transparent and respectful relationships with different sectors of society – if a mission is invited in by government, a good relationship with civil-society groups can help to overcome perceptions of bias
- avoiding too much contact with any one group
- undertaking thorough analysis – this is essential, as ignorance and poor analysis are seldom unbiased in their impact.

Even with the greatest of care, accusations of bias will happen. When they do, the mission needs to assess their merit: if they are based on real problems, it may be advisable for the mission to take corrective action, altering something about its structure, objectives or activities to achieve greater impartiality. If the accusations are false or malicious, the mission needs to defend itself and its objective commitment to impartial protection. Those whose abuses are being observed will often seek to de-legitimise the observer. A mission needs to foresee these accusations and be ready to react.

A mission will be stronger if it effectively rebuffs accusations of bias and sustains a cross-sectoral reputation for fairness and objectivity. Holding this ground, it has the space to convene different players, give voice to the voiceless and make important pronouncements that local players cannot.

Communication techniques

Diplomacy can involve a wide variety of techniques, including direct pressure, indirect pressure ('hinting'), humour, politeness, subordination or humility, praise and stressing mutual objectives or developing solutions together. One field officer describes field communication with authorities and perpetrators as theatre: a performance of politely nuanced threats aimed at instilling concern in abusers about the future consequences of their actions. Another mission leader describes this process of deliberately vague 'hinting' with particularly reactionary military leaders:

> ‘You can’t [convey pressure] very directly. You can allude to the concern of the international community or the forthcoming report to the General Assembly. And certainly at the junior level, you can do a sort of name-dropping, refer to your last discussion with the commander-in-chief or remind them that you have channels that go to their superiors, but you have to do that fairly subtly. Putting things in writing is also important because it can reach more people than your immediate interlocutor, and you can copy it elsewhere and so on.’
>
> UNAMET field officer

Indeed, in tense and constantly changing situations, field staff trying to decide how best to communicate and achieve their objective must be adept at improvising.

> ‘Once “at the scene” – how to deal? Cracking jokes, killing time, being polite; having a good command of the local language was indispensable. Ask for coffee. ‘What a beautiful evening!’ Small talk and small talk and small talk until the tension ebbed away. You had to adopt a style of subordination and subservience. Long-winded praise. I would just try to wear them down. Stressing our ‘mutual objectives…’. They would get so bored with me! But I was never disrespectful. Just always looking to decrease tension. Trying to find intellectual angles…
>
> UNAMET field officer

> ‘You would go to visit the bourgmeistre. You would feel guilty while doing it, because there were all kinds of people waiting in line to see him who needed a paper signed. You would barge in and he would be happy to see you and you would spend 20–30 minutes… I think we interrupted his drudgery of having to sign another visa form to allow someone to visit the next commune… I think it was also a bit prestigious to be seen to be talking to folks from the UN.’
>
> HRFOR field officer

Sometimes the immediate target of influence is not so easily identified or talked to. For example, where widespread civilian displacement is threatened, a mission visit to a region might not target a particular individual, but rather be used as an opportunity to contact many different parties, each having the potential to influence the situation indirectly. In some cases a government will use its own communication experts to influence a mission. The Government of Indonesia sent a special task force headed by a former ambassador and with a corps of English-speaking

personnel from the foreign ministry and military liaisons to deal with UNAMET and the international community.

> **"** 'Now that was a two-edged sword, with advantages and disadvantages. It was partly there to handle us, but in some cases it did act to facilitate our communication, and probably more than that – because these were people with international exposure, and some didn't like what they saw going on, and may have put pressure on their colleagues… we had extremely well set-up channels at all kinds of levels.'
>
> UNAMET head of mission

Box 4.2: Mission language skills

The ability of international personnel to speak local languages can be a crucial skill. Past mission practice has been erratic: if the local language was English, Spanish or French a mission might benefit from fairly high levels of proficiency among its expatriates, but most others depended on local translators.[13] Language allows for intervention and, without it, you can't really hear the other side, and you don't get the nuances of a situation. Local translators are not always reliable, mission staff cannot ascertain their quality, and in any case the interaction is unnatural and inhibited. As a general principle, the usefulness of international field officers increases dramatically in relation to their local language skills.

SLMM monitors with Sri Lankan Army officers
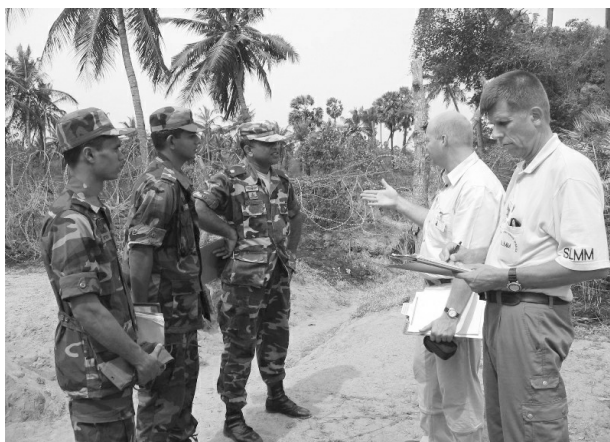
© SLMM photo archive

SLMM monitors with
LTTE cadres

© SLMM photo archive

Diplomatic communications can be carried out by a single institution or jointly. When multiple institutions show up together at meetings, and projecting a similar protection message, the impact can be much greater, while the political risk to each individual institution is lessened.

One subtle way to transmit a protection message in contacts with authorities and armed groups is simply to ask questions about civilian safety. Such curiosity links the specific programmes of an institution with a more general concern about civilian security. Similarly, a humanitarian mission – whatever its specific programmes – should always express visible concern for the safety of its own staff and those of its local partners. However, the mission should also link this concern to civilian safety overall, by calling attention to the programmatic resources provided by the institution and how harmful it would be for all concerned if a lack of security for civilians hindered delivery.

Summary

The communication strategies described in this chapter require analytical, political and diplomatic skills. Specifically, mission staff must be able to:

- identify a range of actors – including abusers, national and local governments, local community leaders or business leaders – to be targeted
- develop and adopt clear, organisation-wide messages for each of these actors that staff members can adapt to their experiences and apply consistently
- open as many channels of communication as possible – this is especially important for armed groups because contact with them is often much more sporadic

- create a culture of respect, transparency, mutual consultation and open handling of accusations
- master different communication techniques, such as direct pressure, indirect pressure, humour, politeness, humility, praise and stressing mutual objectives.

This is a tall order, and every field officer cannot be expected to be a masterful diplomat – such a constraint would paralyse the necessary recruitment for large missions. But it is exactly because these skills are complex and difficult that the institution needs to emphasise them in training and in ongoing field practice. Not every field officer can improvise the perfect line for every situation, but they can learn a great deal from others if the mission commits to helping them.

5

CONSCIOUS VISIBILITY
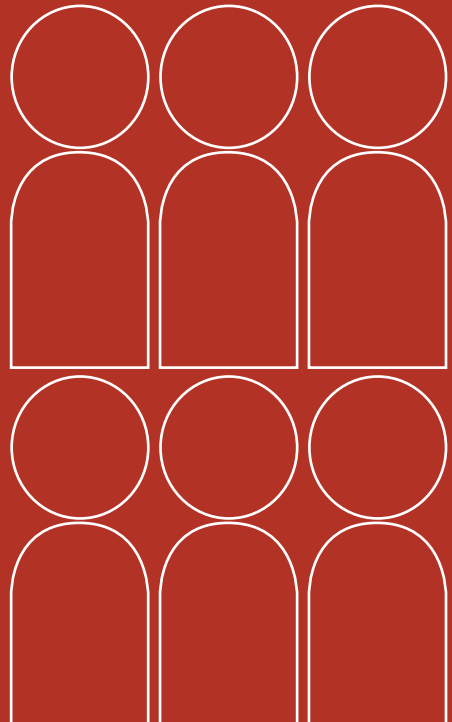
> **"** 'They [the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission] need a larger force. They are too far from incidents. They can't get there fast enough. They need to be more available. When they are close by, there is kind of a guilty feeling: "We might get caught by the monitors." This is not so strong if they are too far away.'
>
> Sri Lankan Army official

Part of the protection message is simply visual: the mission's cars driving through the country, an impressive helicopter now and then, or prominent regional and local offices. Without a word, every sighting of the mission reminds observers that international concern has to be considered in their political calculations. In essence, a mission should visibly project both political power and moral authority.

> **"** 'For the communities this [visibility] generates a reflected protection. Why reflected? Because the simple fact that they see a UN vehicle travelling the roads, through the villages, through zones of high conflict – the simple fact that one of these blue vests is going to go ask after the local troop commander, ask who is responsible for the zone – this alone in itself generates a level of protection because what it says is, "These communities are not alone. These communities have friends in high places".'
>
> Colombian human rights lawyer

The UN missions studied in El Salvador (ONUSAL), Guatemala (MINUGUA), Haiti (MICIVIH) and East Timor (UNAMET) each created a visible 'aura' that affected the national consciousness immediately. Interviewed for this book, an officer of the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) described its presence as complete saturation.

> ''We were visible 24/7. Driving through every single village. No locale was off-limits. When something happened we could set in motion an immediate response.'
>
> KVM officer

It costs money to project such visibility, requiring offices, vehicles and people – and ideally rapid deployment of these to make an impact. Slow deployment has hampered many missions, forcing them to recuperate from an initially weak image as they slowly expanded. And in the rare cases of excessive presence, a mission should consider the need for some level of modesty: a preponderance of luxury air-conditioned land-cruisers constantly driving around poverty-stricken communities can quickly become a source of resentment.

Mission visibility is intended to sustain constant concern in the minds of abuser parties, and also to build confidence among civilians. This dual audience can cause a dilemma at times – it might seem strategic to emphasise meetings and contact with government and military officials, at the expense of visits to civil-society groups or rural villages. But if a mission locates its office in the richest part of town, close to facilities and circles of power, it may be much less approachable or accessible to poor victims of abuse. One activist representing victims from poor communities, for instance, complained, 'They just stay up there where it's comfortable.'

A mission needs to overcome the temptations or imposed restrictions that limit its visibility to certain safer areas, or only to those which rate high on the international agenda. Security concerns should of course be a key factor in planning geographic projection of mission visibility. The mission therefore needs good security analysis – based fundamentally on detailed political analysis of the changing conflict dynamics in each region. (See also Chapter 10 on security challenges.) In Darfur, for instance, the vast majority of international attention and visibility was situated around larger towns and IDP camps, with only minimal presence if any in the vulnerable communities in the rest of the territory. This caused some concern that UN Security rigidly defined some areas as 'no go' and maintained those limitations even after political conditions changed, thus hindering agency ability to be present in isolated areas.

> " 'I think they have to get closer to the organisations and communities, so people understand more clearly that they can count on their intervention… In the indigenous lands there is no one, and no one hears about what happens… they [international missions] have to get past this idea that they should only show up after something extraordinary happens.'
>
> Colombian indigenous leader

Visible reactions at decisive moments

If a particularly difficult situation arises, and there is a call from the civilian population for help or presence, the willingness and speed with which the international mission visibly responds has important consequences not only for protective impact but also for building local trust and credibility. MICIVIH, KVM and UNAMET, for example, showed the Haitian, Albanian, and Timorese population that they were ready and willing to respond to urgent calls, go to dangerous places and intervene quickly to try to protect. On the other hand, if a mission's response is too slow or too-often negative, refusing aid because it is 'outside our mandate', the trust in the mission felt by threatened groups and communities will be damaged.

This creates a dilemma for many missions – especially in settings of frequent crisis and limited human resources – because the desire to build up longer-term commitments or projects can legitimately constrain the resources available for crisis response. High-profile events also create high expectations of results, and a mission must take special care not to make promises it cannot keep, nor to respond instinctively to a situation unless it has a commitment and capacity for follow-up. Such crises are nevertheless moments when a very focused and intense, short-term use of presence can have a particularly notable protective impact, sending a powerful and memorable signal of solidarity to the victims.

Unfortunately, mission decisions to *reduce* visibility may also affect protection – negatively. The most notorious example is the UN decision to reduce its presence in Rwanda at the beginning of the genocide, sending a clear message of impunity and encouragement to the *genocidaires*. This dynamic can arise in much smaller and subtler ways; therefore, whenever a mission decides to reduce or move its presence in a given area, it should carefully consider the possible negative messages of these decisions.

Each mission should consider a wide variety of mechanisms for visibility, and use each according to how it fits into its broader strategy, and according to current security considerations. Four possible mechanisms include: the installation of regional or local offices, the use of special visits or commissions, direct accompani-

ment of threatened individuals or groups, and the use of a humanitarian-assistance function as protective visibility. Each of these is discussed in turn in the next four sections. (Chapter 8, Public advocacy, looks at other strategies also related to visibility, including use of the media.)

Deploying regional or local offices

The research findings were unequivocal that a field mission has a greater influence on protection if it can deploy its staff to the maximum in zones of conflict, making itself accessible to the population and to all levels of authority, and with the mobility for staff visits to any locality quickly. ONUSAL, MINUGUA, MICIVIH, HRFOR, KVM and UNAMET all deployed the majority of their staff to regional offices throughout the country. SLMM and OHCHR/Colombia, with fewer resources, still put an emphasis on field offices. A mission sub-office is a microcosm of the national presence, and has more direct and daily contact with regional or local authorities and greater access to more communities, also being able to make prompt local responses.

When a mission functions only in the capital, the middle echelons of power have less need to pay attention. But when regional or local commanders know they will get regular visits from the mission next door, and the local communities know that this office is only a few hours away if they need help, the opportunities increase dramatically for all the communication interventions described in the previous chapter. Agencies intervening directly with the LTTE in cases of abduction or forced recruitment, for instance, stressed that the closer they were to the local events, the greater their success rate in freeing people.

The sub-office also helps a mission to 'regionalise' its political analysis, more accurately reflecting local conditions and developing sub-strategies tailored to the peculiarities of local actors. HRFOR staff, for instance, stressed how different the conflict dynamics were from one region of Rwanda to another.

> 'The worst thing that could happen would be for the UN to judge and speak about Colombia based only in Bogotá. Visits to the countryside have more impact. For victims to denounce, it is a delicate risk, and to go all the way to Bogotá to do it is nearly impossible.'
>
> Colombian civil-society lawyer

Even with limited resources, missions have developed sub-office strategies. SLMM compensated for its limited size by establishing part-time 'Point of Contact' offices in communities where it was not permanently stationed, making weekly visits to these offices to receive complaints and reports. Where there are multiple interna-

tional agencies with protection functions in a region, they can collaborate to locate their sub-offices in complementary locations, to multiply coverage. In other cases, organisations have set up 'hub' offices in relatively secure towns in a region, which gives them easy access to more delicate areas nearby. When the UN or a major international mission sets up a sub-office, NGOs will often follow, and the increased presence serves to increase humanitarian space.

In some cases, the sheer size of a country, or difficulties of travel and access, can make the deployment of multiple field offices a daunting challenge, with significant consequences for resources and security. However, if the mission's analysis concludes that the deployment of more sub-offices in rural region would add to its capacity to protect civilians, it will need to address these costs, and make every effort to seek out the necessary resources.

The presence of a sub-office is perceived locally as a visible institutional commitment, and this is broadly appreciated. Civilian groups in Bucaramanga, Colombia, for instance, described the installation of an OHCHR office there as a 'dramatic change'. This was not only because it made their access to the mission logistically easier, but it was also seen as recognising the value of their local identity and the significance of the challenges they faced. This recognition has an encouraging effect in itself.

Short visits, special commissions or delegations

Civil-society groups and others vehemently criticise missions that install themselves in a region but are then virtually invisible, missing opportunities because of bureaucratic decisions to stay indoors. In Colombia, for instance, the most common request to every international mission was that they get out to rural areas more, and visit more communities.

A visit by an international mission to an isolated region sends a message to perpetrators. It thus opens spaces and encourages local action. These visits might be carried out independently by the field mission, or on a multi-partite basis. Sometimes the participation of an international field presence allows a multi-partite investigatory commission to go where national actors would not otherwise venture. This facilitates visits by government officials to isolated regions that, because of guerrilla presence, they had previously considered off-limits. Well-timed visits may even significantly alter civilian choices.

> 'After a grave event, the fact that a commission goes and pays attention – this is a very important factor for a community, encouraging them not to just flee and displace themselves.'
>
> Civil society representative, Colombia

Mission visits may well provide the only access local people have to a mission or to the international community. Many people cannot easily travel to the state or even the provincial capital to make a report, as such trips are often impossible for logistical, financial or security reasons. In some cases in Colombia, mobility was so controlled by armed groups that villagers could not travel at all, and the only time they saw outsiders was during such mission visits.

Proper follow-up to such visits is essential. Unfortunately, in particularly intense conflicts, sporadic visits may increase local vulnerabilities and fears. In Colombia, for instance, many respondents stressed the need for follow-up, sustained presence, or at least frequent regular visits to communities. If a mission intends to intervene in a delicate situation it should be ready to keep in touch, to reduce risks of repetition of the pre-visit problem or of reprisals resulting from the visit. It also needs to demonstrate that it will *do* something. Local people are often willing to bear some level of risk if they believe their interaction with the mission has a chance of helping.

> 'Sometimes we don't even know ourselves what happens after these missions… People want to know how much lobbying resulted, what impact they had in terms of transforming the political situation, and in terms of protection.'
>
> International aid agency representative, Colombia

> 'These visits raise high expectations and hopes. That's why follow-up is so important, especially follow-up on the commitments made as a result of such visits… they sometimes lead to pronouncements by the military or the authorities, but no one holds them to these commitments.'
>
> IDP Advocate, Colombia.

In situations of widespread abuse, a mission will never have the resources to visit every community in need. It must prioritise according to which visits are likely to have the greatest potential to protect the greatest number of people, and according to which will most effectively promote the mission's national protection strategy.

Direct accompaniment

Protective accompaniment is a highly targeted and labour-intensive method of protecting particularly threatened individuals, organisations or activities. It involves literally walking or travelling with a threatened individual, living in threatened communities, or being based at the location of a threatened activity or organisational office. The impact is the same in principle as other protective presence, but much more focused. Accompaniment exclusively identifies and profiles the

protected person or group, saying loudly, in effect, 'Don't touch *this* one!' Because close or regular accompaniment of specific people or groups is so labour-intensive, it is usually reserved for cases of very high risk, or people whose survival is perceived as critical to broader strategies – such as high-profile civil-society leaders, exemplary community efforts or key witnesses in a delicate legal case.

Peace Brigades International has rigorously developed this tool, offering daily accompaniment to many threatened civil-society activists, or having its volunteers living in vulnerable communities that are developing new strategies to confront conflict. Numerous personnel of other missions cited examples as well, including accompaniment of complainants or witnesses in sensitive rights cases, staying overnight in IDP camps or with recently resettled refugees, or hosting and living in safe-houses for victims of sexual violence. Humanitarian agencies sometimes use partner relationships to facilitate a subtle level of direct accompaniment in threatened communities where they have assistance projects. The ICRC accompanies joint medical missions into conflict zones, providing protection to more vulnerable national medical groups while also collaborating in the medical task.

> 'This raises our profile a great deal. Because to go to a village or on a road with the United Nations gives us a high level of protection. Especially because the UN has such close relationships with the state and carries such respect.'
>
> Human-rights lawyer, Colombia

Accompanying threatened groups can be both politically and physically risky, but it has demonstrably saved lives and sustained organisations and communities. Guatemalan refugees, for instance, refused to return from Mexico until they got the Guatemalan government to agree to allow them direct accompaniment in every resettled village – which was provided by dozens of international NGOs and hundreds of international volunteers. Numerous groups in conflict areas attest that their survival would have been in doubt without the direct presence of international NGOs or agencies.

Direct accompaniment requires a careful analysis of the security risks of each case, and the political motivations and sensitivities of the potential attacker. Armed parties should be informed of the accompaniment, and should know that it can and will generate an immediate response if something happens to those being accompanied. Accompaniment is intimate and can involve an emotionally charged relationship. It should be handled professionally, and demands trust, confidentiality and clear agreements. Efforts should be made to minimise the inevitable intrusion into the accompanied person's life or the organisation's internal business.

Perhaps the biggest limitation of the accompaniment methodology is the human

resources it requires. It takes a lot of people to offer intensive accompaniment to even a small number of organisations or communities, and there will always be many more in need than could ever be accompanied. While it is an important part of the tool kit of a protective presence, accompaniment has to be used sparsely and strategically, even by a large mission. The direct accompaniment function, in some cases, may be an area where complementarity is key: certain agencies or NGOs may offer accompaniment to specific partners rather than creating an unrealistic expectation that a general protection mission can meet everyone's accompaniment demands. Pressure to meet too many accompaniment needs may distort a mission's priorities. Nevertheless, the methodology of direct accompaniment should be developed, and available when the context demands it.[14]

Humanitarian assistance and visibility

Humanitarian activities can often serve as a powerful justification for regular access to threatened populations that might otherwise be isolated. Sometimes humanitarian access is possible even when the level of fear in these communities is far too high for any explicit human-rights investigation.

> ❝ 'When you go into a particular zone to protect a community and you have nothing to say, because you can't talk about the violence, your presence generates intrigue and suspicion. What are you doing there? Who called you? In contrast, if they are re-building a school there, you can go in every week to see how the school is doing. This gives you the justification to travel through zones the UN was not passing through before, through checkpoints and all. We get a sustained contact with the community, and hear their concerns.'
>
> UNHCR representative in Colombia

Humanitarian needs assessments can also be key opportunities for international visibility in isolated areas. Joint assessments, looking at both protection and assistance needs, project a dual message: 'We will help. And we are watching.' The provision of assistance can be a crucial door-opener for international presence. The assistance role is important to a variety of local actors, and can thus add a level of security and political weight to the presence and its message, as long as care is taken that the resources being provided are not themselves a target for attack.

Finally, humanitarian agencies working primarily with local partner organisations need to consider carefully how the visible presence of these partners can effectively project the protective political power of the agency itself. This power not only increases protection for communities where the partners work, but also protects the partners themselves. If local armed actors know about these partner-

ships, and that the partners will be supported politically by major international players such as the World Food Programme or other UN agencies, this knowledge becomes a political factor in their calculations about how to treat the communities and partners concerned. Implementing such a projection of power through partners may require some careful consideration of 'labelling' – how partners identify themselves and their relationships with sponsoring international agencies. Personnel from partner agencies should also be offered training in how to manage and communicate this relationship when working in the field.

Summary

A field mission that successfully projects itself visibly throughout a conflict territory should seldom be asked, 'Who are you?'. People should have seen the mission before, heard about its visits elsewhere, known people who have been to its sub-offices, or been told by their boss to pay attention to its visits. Of course, a mission cannot be everywhere at all times, so it must prioritise its visibility and movements according to their potential to protect the greatest number of people, and according to their usefulness to achieve the overall objectives of the presence.

Key methods for achieving effective visibility include:

- developing other 'institutionalised' mechanisms of presence, such as regular points of contact and scheduled rounds
- responding rapidly to crisis situations with visible visits showing solidarity and concern
- deploying sub-offices throughout the territory, where they can be seen and visited, and from which field officers can easily visit state and provincial institutions as well as isolated rural communities
- carrying out regular visits to conflict-prone rural areas, and guaranteeing follow-up to prevent reprisals
- when necessary and feasible, providing direct accompaniment for persons, organisations or communities at high risk
- taking advantage of non-protection programmes (such as humanitarian assessment, educational programmes or medical missions) to emphasise the protective role of international presence
- seeking ways to extend the 'visibility message' of the international presence to local personnel and local partner organisations, such that their own visibility enhances civilian protection without causing security risks to themselves.

6 | ACTIVE ENCOURAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT
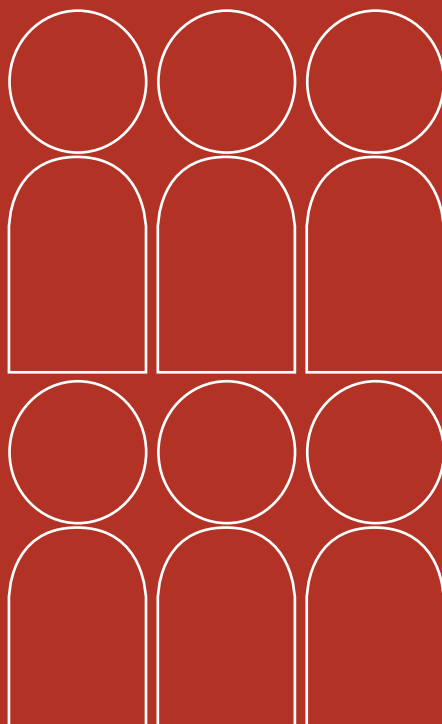
> " 'Many groups would disappear from fear without this monitoring.'
>
> Colombian NGO lawyer

Civilians are not merely the beneficiaries of international efforts for protection. They are protagonists in their own protection. A field mission's efforts, therefore, should both complement and strengthen civil society's capacity to develop its own strategies for addressing abuses. This will include using protective presence to help people overcome their inhibitions and fears about civic activism, supporting communities and organisations in mobilising to promote protection objectives, as well as confronting the polarisation and stigma that isolate and paralyse targeted social groups.

A field mission is just one actor in a broad array of local organisations, local community leadership, national civic movements, political parties, religious organisations, labour unions, women's organisations, peasant organisations and others. In a conflict situation their diverse activities are critical to any serious strategies for change. Some of the most impressive cases of standing up to terror, for instance, come from well-organised, cohesive communities. In contrast, disorganised and unsupported communities are much more vulnerable to manipulation through fear and violence.

A profound lack of protection often reveals something seriously wrong with the relationship between a government and its people – that the people do not have the organisational capacity or power to control their own government. This is a problem often requiring reform and capacity building for civil society, in addition to the government-focused capacity building that often dominates international missions. Long-term change requires an organised and participatory civil society possessing the expertise, resources and structures to restore a healthier relationship

with the state. Otherwise, reforms within the government or attitude changes among abusers may not last.

The political-space model described in Chapter 2 above shows how civilian actions are constrained by both repression and fear. This is a self-reinforcing process, because any restrictions on public or organised activity limit the capacity of a community or society to respond to or sanction abusers. In short, violence inhibits the community's ability to protect itself, and a field mission should seek to counteract this. Conversely, each courageous action by civilians that confronts these inhibitions has a collectively reinforcing effect, pushing away the constraints that others perceive to be limiting their actions.

> **"** 'Here, nothing will happen to you as long as you don't say anything.'
>
> Campesino from Urabá, Colombia

In some communities in conflict zones, fears are so great that people will not speak of them, and thus civil society cannot organise a response. In such situations the presence of the international community may be the only factor that enables people to talk about their problems and to seek solutions. In the LTTE-controlled north and east of Sri Lanka, most Tamils who disagree with the LTTE are afraid to protest. International presence may help overcome such fears and foster increased organisation of civil society with long-term potential for change.

> **"** 'We should be thinking more about joint missions, where the stronger organisations bring a presence that carries protection to local and national groups, but at the same time these national groups bring their experience and knowledge and capacity – which in itself really protects the internationals!'
>
> International monitor, Colombia

Reversing stigma and isolation

Communities or sectors of society are especially in need of protection and encouragement by international presence if they have been stigmatised and isolated by the stereotypes of abuser groups or the dynamics of the conflict. For instance, in Colombia, civilians in a conflict zone are routinely suspected of 'collaboration' with the armed party that controls the territory. Each time territorial control shifts, in either direction, these suspicions can have deadly consequences.

Ethnic groups, movements or sectors of society also face stigmatisation with mortal risks. Hutus in post-genocide Rwanda were suspected of participation in

Box 6.1: Case examples of encouragement and civil-society relationships

- MINUGUA had conscious strategies for strengthening civil society, and used its rural presence to encourage local groups. These groups in turn developed strategies to use the mission's presence, inviting it to events and key meetings, or advocating for mission investigations.
- In 1993–94, repression forced most Haitian activists into hiding, notwithstanding the MICIVIH presence. Although the Haitian people appreciated it, this presence could hardly be said to have encouraged civil-society activism. Monitors there feared that the mission had raised local expectations beyond its ability to fulfil them.
- In Rwanda, encouragement of civil-society organising by the mission appears to have been limited to a few NGOs in the capital, as mission personnel perceived rural civil society as too weakly organised to create an effective partnership.
- The ethnic Albanian population saw KVM in 1998–99 as an ally, but the mission was not there long enough to strengthen civil-society capacity prior to NATO bombing.
- While the international presence in Darfur overall had very weak connections with local civil society, humanitarian agencies had partnerships with local assistance NGOs. UNHCR, for example, had a protective partnership with a threatened legal-aid NGO.
- SLMM did not regard the strengthening of civil-society capacity to protect itself as falling within its mandate. Many local respondents voiced high levels of disillusionment with the mission's perceived distance from civil-society groups, and urged it to develop closer links.
- OHCHR and UNHCR were warmly described as firm allies by civil-society groups in Colombia, and engaged in countless joint activities. In fact, encouragement is a two-way process, as human-rights groups pointed out that the OHCHR presence itself is in part the *result* of years of civil-society pressure on the state and the international community.

genocide *and* support for the insurgency. The Guatemalan Army carried out systematic public disinformation campaigns to convince local residents that refugees returning from Mexico were all guerrillas. Displaced people are often automatically suspected of being politically responsible for their misfortune, while union activists and members of human-rights NGOs are routinely labelled 'guerrillas' or 'terrorists'.

These stigmatising stereotypes are resilient – once in people's minds they don't go away easily. An international mission can set a counter-example by its own behaviour, making contact with isolated and stigmatised groups, and finding opportunities to break down the stereotypes:

> 'These communities were completely stigmatised, and the UN visits helped confront this. These visits were important even though they were short. In 1997, they verified the collaboration of paramilitaries and police. In fact, the paramilitaries directly threatened the commission. But the commission helped open up people's voices.'
>
> Colombian church worker.

Problems in mission relationships with civilians

With a genuine belief in its own good intentions, a mission can sometimes take for granted its relationship with civil society. But numerous factors can damage this relationship, such as:

- civilian perceptions of pro-government mission bias, due to technical and political relationships with ministries
- lack of transparency – the appearance of secrecy provokes distrust
- excessively rigid or bureaucratic responses to civilian requests
- cultural insensitivity
- inability to speak the local language
- alienating statements or behaviour by mission staff, showing apparent contempt for local civil society
- violation by mission staff of local ethical standards and codes of conduct (for example by visiting brothels, excessive drinking, dating local people)
- poor analysis, raising doubts about the mission's capacity to help
- neglectful treatment of information and sources
- dealing primarily with national elites, which can be problematic especially if the political elites and the conflict are divided along ethnic lines
- depleting civil-society organisations by absorbing their activists into relatively high-paid roles in mission support
- allowing manipulation of the mission by the state or an armed group
- reluctance to address issues with the government on the grounds of sustaining a 'good relationship'
- poor security behaviour, creating fear of associating with the mission
- being too small a mission to respond respectably to civilian needs.

Perhaps worst of all, international organisations sometimes absorb and repeat stigmatising stereotypes against domestic groups or communities, either through carelessness or as a result of trusting biased sources of information. Given the perceived 'neutral' credibility of institutions concerned, careless repetition of stereotypes can be particularly damaging. All too often, international personnel repeat government suspicions of local NGOs, or allege links to a guerrilla movement. An international mission should ensure that its formal and informal messages do not unconsciously exacerbate the stigmatisation and isolation of certain groups. If other international organisations engage in such stereotyping, they should be confronted and urged to change their approach.

> '' 'When [they] refuse to talk with us, saying, "I can't have a relationship with you because of our neutrality"… this sends a signal that they believe we have links with the guerrillas, and this signal puts us in danger.'
>
> Local NGO lawyer

Encouragement without raising false expectations

Unless encouragement is linked to a real improvement in security, a mission can encourage excessive risk-taking. Local activists interviewed for this book reported that, under the stress they face, they often cannot pay careful enough attention to security precautions, and that a useful role of an international presence would be to help them learn security skills, for example through workshops. An international presence cannot use 'non-substitution' or 'local empowerment' as an excuse to renege on its responsibility to protect. For instance, according to some respondents, the UN presence in Afghanistan encouraged the national human-rights body to implement human-rights investigations, even in situations where there was no security for them to do so. They argue that a more robust international mission should have been present to accompany and protect the Afghan investigators and take some of the heat for their findings. When citizens taking risks to protect others are themselves attacked or threatened, a protection mission must do everything possible to come to their aid.

The East Timor experience is an example of very high-stakes encouragement. UNAMET's presence encouraged full popular participation in the very dangerous ballot that led to independence, and enabled Timorese political organisations to feel that they in turn could encourage popular participation. As violence and threats mounted, the UN promised, 'We will not leave.' But it was a promise that it could not keep: as security conditions deteriorated drastically, the mission reached a point

where it felt that its protective impact was not significant enough to justify the risk to its staff. The mission first pulled out of all the provinces, and then held on in Dili until a military intervention was mandated, and until it could evacuate the national staff and IDPs hiding in its compound. Here, the UN policy of encouragement – firmly supported by the leadership of Timorese civil society – arguably increased civilian vulnerability to subsequent massacres. Some argue that UNAMET should never have made such an unequivocal promise, since it could not guarantee the protection implied. In contrast, subsequent feedback from Timorese activists suggests that this encouragement was a worthwhile risk, given that it helped to end an occupation that had already cost tens of thousands of Timorese lives.

Encouragement is thus very complex – who decides how far to go? A mission should, of course, never actively encourage excessive risk-taking by civilians, nor overstate its own protective value. But civilians will make their own choices about whether to feel encouraged by a presence, and which risks to take. An international mission can't stop local people from choosing to take risks, and arguably shouldn't even if it could. In the face of repression and conflict, risk-taking is essential to any process of change.

Box 6.2: A key national actor – the Catholic Church in Latin America

In all the Latin American cases studied, the Church has been very active in protecting civilians. Although the state is the 'legal duty-bearer' when it comes to civilian protection, the Church in Latin America has often been the 'moral duty-bearer', advocating for protection and humanitarian support. Sometimes Church involvement features the top institutional hierarchy, but even without such leadership, local priests and dioceses actively protect civilians.

The Church is often the only national institution maintaining contact with all parties in a conflict, and with communities throughout a territory, making it an unparalleled source of information, analysis and influence. It can influence authorities as well as encourage popular confidence, and consequently its activists have often needed international protection.

Missions should make a special effort to understand such influential institutions, their divisions and power structures, and their potential strategies for promoting peace and protection. These institutions may have far more influence on political and conflict developments than any international presence.

Summary

The mission needs to ask at every turn: who in civil society is affected by this problem? Who is already taking action (or should be) on this problem? What alliances and collaborations are going to move us forward towards a solution? What is the best role for this mission within this broader context?

A mission should encourage complementary strategies by other actors, both international and national. The concept of proactive presence is by no means reserved for the international community: reputable national institutions (religious, professional of civic) can also use their status to protect weaker and more isolated groups. A field mission, therefore, can encourage influential members of society such as business owners, entertainers, diplomats, clergy and others to engage in protective presence and advocacy, or can encourage the presence of high-ranking officials or local celebrities at events relating to people at risk. The mission should generally use its clout both by giving direct protective coverage and also by encouraging locally based protection efforts.

There is a variety of steps a mission can take to pursue these objectives:

- Include civil-society sources in information-gathering, and local advisers in analysis, where appropriate.
- Develop an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of local civil society, identify key organisations with potential for a multiplier effect, and work for relationship building and support.
- Never settle for the simplistic analysis that there is no organised civil society to relate to: keep looking.
- Provide protective presence as needed for vulnerable or stigmatised communities and groups.
- Develop mechanisms or platforms to involve civil society directly in the mission's work.
- Develop mechanisms for regular dialogue with key civil-society groups.
- Pay attention to how mission behaviour can strengthen or damage civilian trust.
- Control expectations through transparent dialogue with civilian groups, in order to avoid excessive risk-taking.
- Consider organising joint missions with local and national groups.
- Support civil-society efforts, both financially and politically, that contribute to human rights and protection.
- Offer skills-building support on security and protection, international law, human-rights monitoring or other key topics to interested civil-society groups.

7

CONVENING AND BRIDGING
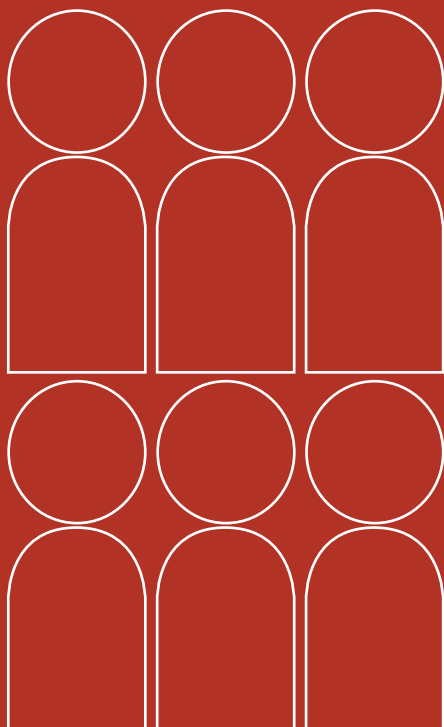
> 'You need to open spaces that bring together communities or NGOs who are threatened or stigmatised, where they can get closer to the state institutions, before something worse happens to them – at a table where they can describe their problems and what has happened to them. But at least have some direct personal contact – it helps to break down prejudices… when they sit down together and talk about very concrete things and about how each party should be behaving – in my opinion this contributes to their physical protection.'
>
> OHCHR field officer, Colombia

An international field presence can provide a bridge across divides created by conflict. An international mission is often the only actor with the capacity and credibility to convene different parties, and is particularly well-placed to bring together threatened civil-society groups with state representatives. In interviews carried out during the research for this manual, the power of this bridging role was acknowledged by civil-society groups, field officers and government representatives alike.

> 'The international role can improve citizen participation and relationship with their own authorities. The international community can help to develop closer relationships between the community, the NGOs and local authorities – building bridges of confidence.'
>
> Head of Human Rights Department, Colombian National Police

Convening activities have a protection function even when they do not yield any promising steps towards reconciliation or immediate problem-solving, because they create new paths of communication and dialogue. Additionally, every time a vulnerable group or activist is associated with the field mission in the presence of

the state or armed group, their credibility and thus their quota of protection increases, as this relationship symbolises a political cost to anyone who might consider an attack against this person or group.

Subtle, low-intensity bridging

Shuttle diplomacy

Simply having relationships with multiple parties opens up opportunities to transmit concerns and seek solutions, without even bringing the parties together. As one Colombian NGO activist explained, 'The fact that the OHCHR sustains close relationships with NGOs and communities – this also builds confidence with state functionaries, assuring them that we are not all their enemies. We are more able to talk.'

Field officers from the Human Rights Mission for Rwanda (HRFOR) set up desks inside prisons and established direct relationships with prisoners. But these same officers were regularly meeting and socialising with prison officials, building up a rapport. This rapport opened up many opportunities for the effective transmission of concerns to prison officials, and for seeking solutions together. Given the tragic prison conditions, every incremental change or early release had life-saving potential.

In some polarised situations, this 'shuttle diplomacy' is recognised explicitly by the parties involved. Sri Lankan police and civilians alike pointed out that they had no channel for talking to the LTTE guerrillas, and they respected the role of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) as a formal go-between in local situations where communication was essential to defuse tensions.

> " 'With the armed forces it has been difficult for us, as there is a lot of friction between civil-society groups and the armed forces. But they [the UN] have played the role of intermediaries. We speak with the OHCHR office, the office speaks to the army, and then talks to us again. This has worked a little better than having direct meetings.'
>
> Civil-society lawyer in Medellín, Colombia

Getting more voices heard

Civil-society groups often face a situation where they cannot get any audience with the state or with an armed group; or if they do achieve such audiences, all they receive are accusations of subversive activities, and they may be labelled as traitors by their own communities for trying to communicate with 'the enemy'. UNHCR protection officers in Sri Lanka recounted numerous examples of being the 'voice' of civilians who either feared, or could not get, an audience with either party. This often opens up the first opportunity for a productive dialogue.

Likewise, for state authorities, an international mission's willingness to maintain contact with civil-society groups gives these groups a credibility that makes state authorities more willing to listen. As one civil-society representative explained to a field worker, 'If you will bring this issue up at the meeting, then I will be able to talk about it.' When it works, groups, previously ignored, finally feel their voices are heard. Over time this can evolve into a real dialogue, to some extent humanising a polarised situation.

Bringing a guest

Doors tend to open for an international mission, and sometimes the mission can usher other people through those doors. It can recommend to civil-society groups that they invite officials to collaborate on initiatives. Or it can bring civil-society voices into greater contact with state mechanisms. For instance, support for Rule of Law programmes can encourage the involvement of legal experts from within national civil society, thus allowing a technical-support relationship to facilitate dialogue and connection.

More intensive and structured convening

Multi-partite delegations

The technique of making visits (as described in Chapter 5) can be particularly powerful when the visitor becomes a 'multi-partite delegation' involving representation from the state, civil society and the field mission going together to assess a situation. Such experiences of working together invite collaboration on formal follow-up, and can create permanent relationships. Colombian activists pointed out, for instance, that after a government official participates in such a trip, it is much easier for civilian groups to initiate legal cases relevant to the events studied. Sometimes, these initiatives bring government officials for the first time to communities that have been completely isolated.

> 'the important work is out in the many hundreds of villages where the state has been completely absent. I just came back Friday from a week-long trip on one river. We met with indigenous communities, and when we asked them when was the last time they had had a visit from a state authority, they replied that since they founded the community eight years ago they had never had a single visit from a government functionary. This time, only because we went, a representative of the Defensoría came with us.'
>
> OHCHR field officer, Colombia

Convening meetings and discussions

An international presence can sometimes defuse polarisation just enough to create a neutral space where moderate leaders can be heard and find some common ground to quell tension. These might be informal or confidential meetings, or larger consultations where different voices share the floor. In the east of Sri Lanka, for instance, both the SLMM and the NGO Nonviolent Peace Force proactively convened Tamil and Muslim community leadership when communal violence broke out, effectively preventing escalation. In Darfur, respondents described a unique and reconciliatory gathering of African and Arab nomad sheikhs, convened and accompanied by an international agency's protection officers. Such consultations might address thematic questions, or the needs of particular groups. For instance, women's groups and indigenous groups have requested that field missions facilitate a greater 'voice' for their concerns.

Workshops

Skills workshops, in addition to their capacity-building impact, are mechanisms for bridge-building and also protection. For example, a Colombian activist was calling attention to constant police mistreatment and torture of youths arrested on gang-related and drugs charges; he faced death threats from sources he presumed to be close to the police. The OHCHR mission organised a workshop with the police on youth issues, asking this man to participate as co-trainer. This helped to sensitise the police on the issue, but also gave the civilian activist some UN legitimacy, de-stigmatising his role in the eyes of the police. It even led to ongoing relationships with some police contacts. He is convinced it contributed to saving his life, and strengthened his ability to advocate for vulnerable young people.

Longer-term joint initiatives

Various inter-sectoral working groups, thematic commissions and other structures have been facilitated by international missions, in which different parties accept responsibility for working together and addressing the concerns of civilians. The Colombian case study was particularly rich with examples of these initiatives over the years. These joint-working experiences can be difficult, controversial and sometimes disillusioning, but they can also move state functionaries to show some real responsiveness to civilian concerns, while allowing civil-society groups to identify and work with progressive allies inside the state apparatus. It usually takes time to develop such initiatives.

> ‘Here at the regional level it has been possible [due to OHCHR presence] to organise working groups and discussion with the Fiscalia, with the head of the Procuraduria, the interior ministry and the mayor's office. This has worked very well, enabling us to overcome many misunderstandings… In this line of work there is sometimes a tendency to believe that all who work for the state are the enemy, and for them to think that everyone in social organisations is the enemy as well.'
>
> Civil-society lawyer, Colombia

> The field officer involved in this initiative stressed that the impact is only seen over time. ‘We've met every two weeks – for over two years now. It requires constant nourishment and mutual learning. Now we are starting to see results. I am certain there are some actions of the army… that finally after being dealt with by this committee have resulted in some investigations. There are constant meetings about concrete problems and situations.'
>
> OHCHR field officer, Colombia

Joint mechanisms for early warning and prevention

In some cases, a field mission can help to create structures intended to identify escalating situations that will adversely affect civilian communities and mobilise a preventive and protective response by multiple actors. These early-warning structures bring together government, civil society and international players to diagnose local risks, produce timely reports and recommend preventive action by the authorities. The practical impact of such mechanisms depends largely on the commitment of the state, and for this reason the attempts at early-warning mechanisms in Colombia have been disillusioning to some.

> ‘We spent two years working out a protocol with UN, the government, the ICRC and the Church, on protection of communities at risk, which included both visits and follow-up, within a rights-based framework. It's an excellent work in academic terms, but of no use in practice, because the government has impeded implementation. I think the UN needs to be more proactive, and we're going to keep trying.'
>
> Activist for IDP rights, Colombia

Other mechanisms have integrated the efforts of the humanitarian community, both international and national. For instance, the negotiation of ‘humanitarian accords' holding armed parties to commitments about protection as well as access

to assistance has been an avenue for collaboration among Church, humanitarian, and protection actors, together with states and armed groups. These accords can establish ongoing monitoring mechanisms that sustain these connections.

A mission must, of course, take care not to raise unrealistic hopes in ineffective or co-opted mechanisms, because disillusionment can counteract the positive benefit of co-operation. However, when these efforts are even partially successful, they place protection and prevention concerns squarely before the state bodies responsible for civilian security. They also bring together civil-society, religious, government and international actors who share an obligation or concern regarding civilian security.

Box 7.1: Key government allies: the example of the Colombian Defensoria

International intergovernmental missions in Colombia have supplied substantial technical support to the *Defensoria,* an ombudsman-like body established by the government, as well as to a special human-rights branch of the *Fiscalia* (justice ministry) ostensibly devoted to prosecuting human-rights cases. This support is defended on the grounds that these institutions are promoting the rule of law, changing state behaviour from within and supporting reformers. In the absence of any progress towards a political solution in Colombia, however, such government mechanisms have made little if any difference to the near-total impunity that exists in Colombia for abuses against civilians. Members of staff within these institutions span the political spectrum from honest reformers to paramilitary allies. The few *defensores* who dare to challenge the paramilitary movement, or the army's close link to it, are routinely harassed, driven into exile, removed from their positions or killed. Despite some honest prosecutors, the *Fiscalia* is accused of being politically co-opted, and it too has suffered threats against prosecutors and judges.

In such settings, a close alliance with a government agency is a delicate matter, since it affects the public legitimacy of an international mission. Mission staff of OHCHR repeatedly stressed the importance of these links for their work in Colombia. Civil-society respondents, although often positive about the more committed individuals in the *Defensoria*, the *Fiscalia*, and even the police force, were also more prone to scepticism about the naivety of expecting progress through such institutional support. Strong concerns were expressed that if an international mission does not speak out publicly about the ways in which these institutions are manipulated and politically controlled to prevent them from having a real impact on impunity, its alliance and direct support for these bodies may amount to promoting a charade. But even the most critical voices affirmed that the honest reformers within these structures need international protection.

These government bodies with an explicit obligation to protect rights are an important bridge for an international mission. The mission can pull them into investigations, delegations and commissions; it can demand some level of accountability from these bodies. This interaction can help to bring potential allies within the state apparatus closer to the victims of abuse and to understanding their situation, and it can create channels of communication between victims and the state. At a minimum, calls for accountability can help bring to light the impotence or inaction of failed government mechanisms. And at best, active co-operation with honest reformers can create new structures and change institutional attitudes.

International bridging

Relationships between local actors and other international mechanisms and players also have a protection function, and again the unique position of an intergovernmental field mission can enable such relationships. A mission can facilitate interaction between influential international actors and local or national officials who have either a direct protection duty or who are possibly associated with abuses of civilians. These contacts are not only a reminder of the clout of the mission and the political costs of abuse, but they can also be a positive status symbol for the officials seen to be meeting important international figures. These contacts can help progressive functionaries inside abusive institutions to find additional international support for reform and legitimate protection efforts. For example, one creative technique for supporting promising reformers is to arrange to have them invited outside the country to international conferences, consultations and trainings, where they will come into contact with other progressive allies, who will further encourage their reform efforts.[15]

Civil-society groups appreciate every possible chance to meet with Special Rapporteurs or other international figures or delegations visiting the country, and the field mission can and should facilitate this. A field mission can also facilitate civil contact with representatives of embassies – in capital cities, or when embassy staff travel to regions. An even stronger relationship can develop if the mission can facilitate visits by embassy officers and other intergovernmental representatives to the regions of conflict, where they can come into direct contact with communities and locally threatened groups. As before, every visible contact with these influential international actors adds to the quota of political protection available to threatened groups.

Some international institutions understandably fear jeopardising their neutrality and will choose not to promote local groups publicly at a global level. If so, they can still choose quieter and safer ways to pursue the same links. These relationships are

in the field mission's interest, because external networks can carry out independent lobbying and advocacy in the international community, building up protection for the groups concerned. They can provide types of political support that are outside the mandate and capacity of a field mission, but that can have direct and complementary protective impact. And when these local groups have their own networks of support, they are less likely to need to call on the field mission when they are facing a crisis or threat. Furthermore, any increase in the level of international solidarity for civil-society groups may also yield an increase in international political support for the mission itself.

Summary

Convening and bridging strategies bring together polarised actors and facilitate dialogue between local or national actors and international players. These strategies require constant observation of these diverse interactions and sound political analysis in order to identify the right opportunities to improve relationships and give leverage to vulnerable civilian groups.

Mission staff should be trained in strategic use of the whole array of bridging techniques, including:

- shuttle diplomacy – being in contact with polarised groups, or with both victims and perpetrators
- enhancing the voice of marginalised groups
- raising issues that can be dangerous for local groups to raise
- organising multi-partite delegations or investigations involving both civil society and government
- using international credibility to convene meetings of multiple parties
- organising workshops or other events involving multiple parties
- creating longer-term multi-partite mechanisms, such as thematic working groups or commissions, or humanitarian accords
- creating or supporting early-warning mechanisms that assemble representatives from government, civil society and the international community to diagnose local risks and identify preventive action
- facilitating contact between local or national actors with influential international groups, including visiting delegations, rapporteurs, and the diplomatic corps
- using programmes of direct technical assistance with the state to provide additional bridging opportunities with direct protection benefits.

All of these strategies draw on the unique credibility that an international presence can possess, a credibility that inspires confidence on the part of civil society while also opening doors of communication to armed parties and governments. This potential, when fully realised, can yield creative solutions for the protection of civilians.

8 | PUBLIC ADVOCACY
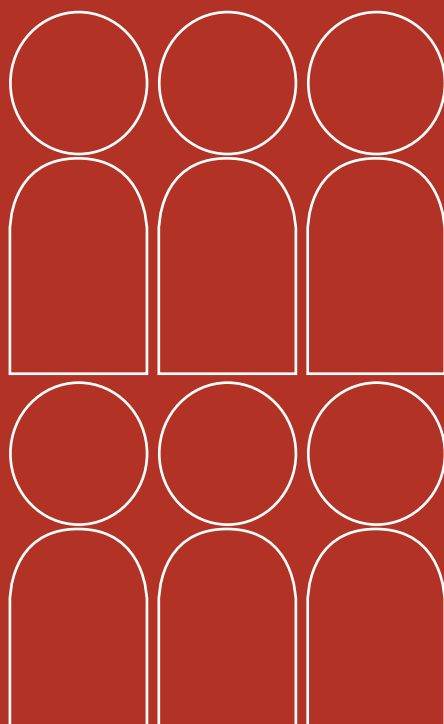
Public reporting and advocacy are perhaps the most traditional tools of protection. Public exposure is a political cost to an abuser, and public encouragement is an incentive for reform. Globally targeted advocacy by a field mission can increase the level of international political attention and pressure being applied by others, generating additional future political costs. These strategies are broadly acknowledged as powerful, though not all of the missions studied took full advantage of them. Yet even in the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), one of the least public of the missions studied, field officers pointed out, 'The only threat we have is to show the statistics'. ICRC respondents stressed the complementary value of other organisations' public approaches.

Every public strategy, whether it involves human-rights reporting, using the media or organising public events, has associated risks and drawbacks, which are evaluated differently by different institutions. Each mission will need to choose its own approach, according to its view of how best to contribute to protection in the short, medium and long term. The concept of strategic sequencing discussed in Chapter 3 is important in planning work on public advocacy, as the solution to a given problem may or may not require high-level intervention. Each advocacy campaign needs to be calibrated to take into account several factors:

- the current political context
- receptiveness of the target to public advocacy or pressure
- existing levels of political support for the advocacy message, both domestically and internationally
- the prior history of attempts to deal with the issue through non-public strategies.

This strategic process should also consider the benefits of complementarity in public messages: how different institutions' messages can separately influence a

situation towards the desired outcome, and when a combined message of multiple institutions might be stronger and more effective. When using public advocacy, it is important to avoid the temptation to create a shock for its own sake. Information should not be released too early, after insufficient investigation, as this can affect the credibility of all future advocacy. The objective of the advocacy is not the headlines, but a concrete improvement in the situation, and the style of each message should be crafted with this in mind.

Benefits and risks of public advocacy

The value of public advocacy and reporting

Careful public advocacy can enhance a mission's protection of civilians in many ways:

- sanctioning abusers through public exposure
- giving positive reinforcement to reformist factions in government
- establishing a mission as a credible authority on civilian-protection needs
- setting the tone of national debate on civilian protection
- helping to create appropriate expectations of the mission within the local population
- reducing local suspicion and counteracting accusations of bias, through education
- promoting awareness of protection needs and human rights
- encouraging involvement of civil society in the promotion of protection and human rights
- raising the profile of isolated groups and individuals at risk
- strengthening international concern, increasing the quota of international political will to take necessary action.

Risks of public advocacy

Public advocacy can, however, sometimes create friction and even result in retaliation. Missions considering these strategies also have to weigh the risks, including:

- retaliation against the mission by accused armed actors, including threats, harassment or attacks that could limit the possibilities of implementing other protective strategies
- retaliation by closing off access to regions or vulnerable populations
- expulsion of the whole mission, or individual personnel being declared *persona non grata*

- retaliation against local contacts and sources
- alienation of key contacts
- closing off dialogue with the government, which should be the main guarantor of protection.

Many of these strengths and risks are already discussed in other parts of this book. A few items deserve additional comment, though, before the second half of this chapter looks in detail at public techniques.

Strengthening international concern

'We have seen 20 years of recommendations that are never complied with. The only things that are ever complied with are those things associated with the greatest amount of international pressure.'

Colombian civil-society activist

A lack of international political will or commitment to take vigorous steps for civilian protection is often cited as the major challenge facing a field presence. But political will is not static, and a mission's international advocacy can change it. Sometimes, at the outset, there is barely enough international interest to deploy a presence. Rather than adjusting its expectations and strategies to an inadequate level of international support, each mission must consider all possible means of persuading the international community to step up its commitment.

The protective impact of a local presence, for instance, is greater if the local actors fear that their names might be showing up in international reports, potentially causing complaints from their superiors. A mission strategy can make this more probable through a variety of external mechanisms, including globally distributed reports, international media campaigns, direct lobbying with other governments or linkage to international legal mechanisms. Often, this 'international advocacy' happens in country, as missions keep the local diplomatic community informed through briefings or even quiet collaborative planning.

If this risk of exposure of abusers exists, it can serve as an incentive or subtle threat that can enhance all the communication and diplomatic efforts described in Chapter 4. In other words, a public-advocacy strategy is useful even when it is not being exercised. Conversely, if violators know that a mission will never or rarely expose them, the power to influence is diminished. The international community is interested in international field missions. External states will trust mission reports, and be more willing to bring pressure to bear with the support of credible information. And these states may also be the donors making decisions about the mission's funding. A mission that fears or chooses not to engage actively with the interna-

tional community is missing a significant opportunity for both protection and support.

Sometimes, international actors that ought to be active allies of a field mission need some prompting through advocacy to fulfil their obligations to protect people. Unfortunately, pessimism about the elusive 'international political will', or about institutional inertia, is so prevalent that sometimes missions hesitate even to ask for

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Box 8.1: Creating international political will

In the missions studied, there were diverse approaches to international advocacy.

- In Haiti, MICIVIH's regular public reports helped to build international interest in a large-scale intervention in late 1994, even though the willing-ness to intervene had been missing during the crises of 1993.
- In Central America, MINUGUA and ONUSAL used both regular public reporting and informal diplomatic communication to sustain an internation-al critique of implementation of the peace agreements.
- UNAMET in East Timor bolstered international will sufficiently to assure continued pressure on Jakarta. Its risk-taking presence gave its messages legitimacy, making it difficult for the regime's propaganda to work.
- Controversially, KVM exploited incidents in Kosovo to build international support for NATO's subsequent intervention.
- HRFOR provided regular briefings to the donor community in Kigali, Rwanda, but with little impact on overall support for the RPA government. When the RPA expelled the mission, there were no voices of protest from any major international players.
- The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission maintains diplomatic relationships in Colombo, but is only minimally engaged in international advocacy for civil-ian protection.
- OHCHR-Colombia actively publicises reports and lobbies internationally, and has good support within the local international community. Despite continued high levels of impunity for abusers, and little international action, humanitarian and human-rights players maintain pressure on donors to link aid to protection needs, and the OHCHR mission plays a key role in pro-viding analysis for this advocacy.
- When various UN voices raised the alarm of near-genocide in Darfur in 2004, the pressure opened up access to a substantial field presence. More recently, many international field personnel have been wondering where the advocacy pressure has gone, and do not feel that they have access to advo-cacy channels to build up more external pressure.

what is necessary. Instead there is self-censoring for fear of a negative answer. One UN official described an example in which mission leadership did not request the number of human-rights monitors that they believed to be necessary, assuming in advance that this would be refused. Another UN official commented 'We have learned what the Security Council will buy.' The leadership of a mission, however, should not settle for too little from its international allies. Even if demands for greater international action may risk the ire of the host government, mission leaders and institutional sponsors need to get into the fray and sometimes demand the apparently impossible.

Fear of expulsion or reprisal

The fear of expulsion or loss of access commonly holds back organisations with a field presence from getting more actively involved in public advocacy and promoting greater international action. Some protection officers in Darfur noted a dynamic of 'anticipatory obedience', wherein the Sudanese government had effectively silenced advocacy with vague hints of sanctions affecting access, or simply by making advocates feel 'pushy'. Some missions, including MICIVIH and HRFOR, have suffered expulsions, and their public reporting arguably contributed to this. Field officers were nonetheless quite proud of the times when their missions had been outspoken about abuses, at the risk of expulsion, and thought it was the right thing to do.

The fear of reprisal is often overstated. In our interviews in North and South Darfur,[16] even NGOs that have been fairly vocal in their advocacy assert that although this may increase their risk of harassment, they did not see this significantly affecting their ability to deliver services. Although there were some incidents and examples of apparent closure of access, the connection between advocacy and losing access is generally very tenuous. The more common pressure faced by humanitarian organisations is the harassment of their staff. One observer referred to this as a 'calibrated harassment, a counter-strategy against the international presence'. But even the correlation between advocacy and harassment is not statistically clear. In Darfur, for instance, personnel from many agencies felt that they were regularly harassed regardless of their level of vocal advocacy.

A mission, always measuring the political space available to it, must take calculated risks. A host state will most often *not* want to suffer the political cost of expelling a credible international presence, despite having threatened to do so. Conversely, states are sometimes so interested in the image benefits of having an international presence that a mission might even use the threat of voluntary exit as political pressure. As some ICRC respondents suggested, one should be ready to demand 'meaningful presence or no presence'. This means that the parties must

show a real willingness to alter behaviour rather than merely manipulating a presence or using it to create a positive image, and that a mission should be willing to leave if the conditions or constraints of access are unacceptable.

Clearly, either risking expulsion or exiting in protest carries a heavy cost in loss of access. Many would say, 'we can't help at all if we are not there', and this must be considered. But a mission also has to set limits and standards about what constraints are acceptable. If it reveals that it will put up with anything just for permission to stay, it has little power left with which to influence.

Local civilian groups in Colombia, interviewed during a period when sources close to the government were hinting at expelling the UN, were nearly unanimous in their call for greater outspokenness by all international missions present. They felt it was worth taking some risk of expulsion, arguing that little would change in Colombia if the international community remained indifferent to the conflict. Similarly, fear of reprisal against local contacts also forestalls public action, but committed local activists often see the risk as worth taking. As one Sri Lankan Muslim community leader replied, when asked whether more public SLMM action on complaints would put local complainants at greater risk, 'As a community we are willing to face that risk. If nothing is public, people get more and more disillusioned.'

A state will more often resort to a lesser reprisal, such as harassment, or quietly expelling individual mission members rather than an entire mission. Field personnel say that the inhibiting fear of being dubbed *persona non grata*, by getting too close to controversial protection issues, can result in a quiet lack of initiative. Unfortunately, institutional practices can reinforce this insidious dynamic, by not protesting such individualised expulsion, and by allowing field officers' careers to suffer as a result.

> 'A state may resort to blackmailing the mission or bluffing it by requesting the departure of one of the most active members of its team, for whatever reason, while underlining the virtues of the mission, its great work otherwise, etc, so as to create divisions within the mission, and, if the mission caves in, which it often does, send a clear message to all other team members. A mission must refuse to be dictated to on its staffing policy by the host government – full stop. No professional and credible staff should be sacrificed for a so-called "greater good" of the mission – this is never a "greater good", but the beginning of the end for it. It is a test of strength that must be fought with clarity, courage and determination, and that must be won: the mission will gain respect through it, or lose respect if it caves in.

> ❝ 'All staff need to be protected against these attempts – and know that as long as they are doing their professional duties, they will be protected by their own hierarchy. They absolutely need that support to keep morale up and, with it, the strength and courage to continue the struggle.'
>
> Field protection officer

Closing the space for dialogue

Another thorny dilemma of public advocacy is that it can alienate key contacts and cut off dialogue with accused abusers. Chapters 4 and 7 argued that communication with the abuser institution is critical to protection, and that missions can even build enough trust to convene divergent groups and solve problems. These strategies require open channels of communication. ICRC respondents, for instance, often point out that the quality of dialogue necessary to achieve their objectives is difficult to sustain in parallel with active public criticism. Other agencies recount times when abuser groups 'punished' a mission for its public criticism by simply shutting the door for a while. In theory, public advocacy could have a net negative effect, if the protection benefits it produces are outweighed by the costs of losing other protection opportunities.

This is a powerful dilemma, because no one has yet proven empirically that one strategy produces better protective results than another. But some missions have managed to continue both public critique and close relationships with criticised parties. There are reasons, after all, why abusive actors tolerate or even want the mission there, and resulting diminished dialogue may often be temporary. Transparency and respect are important here. HRFOR, for instance, was harshly criticised by the Rwandan government for some of its public reporting, and subsequently came to an agreement that its reports would not go public until the government saw them first – a move seen as showing respect while also protecting the mission. Establishing ongoing and regular processes for contact between the mission and authorities or armed groups can help, so that concerns that arise may be discussed rather than left to fester; and relationships may be mended.

In some cases, the explicit political goals of a mission may affect its objectivity and limit its willingness to use public advocacy techniques. A ceasefire monitoring mission or complex peace presence, for instance, may have a clear political mission to sustain a particular set of agreements between the parties. This objective requires an ongoing rapport that may appear to collide with the friction that can result from public advocacy that is critical of the parties.

The risk of silence

For these and other reasons, some institutions choose to avoid or minimise public advocacy. Human-rights NGOs, both international and local, are generally very critical of this choice. They argue that the proximity of a field presence to abuses carries with it a moral responsibility to speak out, especially since an abusive party, by hosting a mission's presence, may be seen as co-operative, and this could actually strengthen its hand to carry out abuses. If there are enough international actors present, the public advocacy of one organisation can support the quiet advocacy of another. But a problem arises if too many leave the public role to 'someone else'. When a situation is too dangerous for local people to speak out, and every international agency stops talking too, all that remains is silence.

Techniques of public advocacy

Institutional and general audiences

Public advocacy can take many forms and call for a variety of responses. It may be aimed directly at the offending party, demanding changes in behaviour. The message may be intended for more general consumption, with an objective of pressuring the target through a variety of sources, including both domestic audiences and the international community. It might be aimed more specifically at prompting action by the UN Security Council (UNSC), UN rapporteurs or the Human Rights Commission. Public reports, therefore, might include recommendations of UNSC or rapporteur visits to troubled areas, or for action by a treaty body. The advocacy message might be specifically geared towards the diplomatic community, with an eye to using the leverage of bilateral relationships to influence the actions of the abuser party.

Public reporting on abuses

Public reports can promote all of the positive objectives listed above in this chapter, and for this reason they frequently form part of a protection strategy. Monitoring and reporting are highly developed tools, ably described in other resources. There are, for example, standards and best practices developed for interviewing, information gathering and report writing aimed at ensuring the legal credibility of the public assertions of a mission. Any mission engaging in public reporting needs skilled personnel who understand these tasks and standards and can adapt them to specific contexts and conflicts.

Key resources on human-rights monitoring

There is a wide literature available on human-rights monitoring. Substantial references to training resources can be found in these websites and publications.

Consolidating the Profession: The human rights field officer (www.humanrightsprofessionals.org). This is a research, training and capacity-building project in support of enhanced delivery of services by human-rights field operations, convened and facilitated by the University of Nottingham Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC). This web-page has many of its own research resources, as well as up-to-date links to dozens of other key resources on topics including monitoring, human-rights education, training and reporting.

Human Rights Education Association (www.hrea.org). Numerous links to training resources on monitoring, fact-finding and human-rights education.

Monitoring State-sponsored Violence in Africa. A practical guide. Civil Liberties Organisations, Lagos; Kenya Human Rights Commission, Nairobi; Network of Independent Monitors, Durban, 2000. (http://www.protectionline.org/article.php?id_article=128).

O'Flaherty, Michael (ed). 'The Human Rights Field Operation: Law and practice.' Ashgate (forthcoming).

OHCHR. *Manual on Human Rights Reporting.* Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available online at: http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/monitoring/.

O'Neill, William G. *A Humanitarian Practitioner's Guide to International Human Rights Law.* Occasional Paper 34, Providence, RI: Watson Institute for International Studies, 1999. For copies contact the Humanitarianism and War Project via e-mail at: H&W@tufts.edu.

The reporting process has three key stages, each of which can be planned according to its protective effect: information collection, report preparation and dissemination.

Information collection: Classic human rights 'monitoring', as used by the OHCHR for instance, encompasses much more than reporting. The process of gathering information itself protects, independent of any resulting report. It creates a justification and framework for the kinds of communication and visibility strategies described in Chapters 4 and 5. Just the knowledge that a mission is carrying out a particular investigation can generate changes in perpetrator behaviour.

Humanitarian assessment in Darfur

Michael Heller Chu

While pursuing accurate data, field officers must of course take great care about the confidentiality of information, protecting the identity of victims who could be targeted for reprisals. Interviews must be sensitive to the emotional state of the victims, who may suffer secondary trauma in recounting their experiences. For other victims, the opportunity to tell their story in a setting where they believe it will contribute to change is cathartic and empowering.

Report preparation: A public report – even a formal human-rights analysis – is a strategic message. So while it should be technically and legally accurate, it must also be written in a readable and persuasive format and style. A powerful report should augment national and international pressure and concern, and force abusers into damage-control mode. At best, the report will make explicit recommendations on how abusers can make amends. Such recommendations should in turn facilitate the ongoing daily diplomacy of field officers at the local level.

● Regular, periodic reports allow a mission to follow progress and changes, update situations and report (both critically and positively) on fulfilment of previous recommendations. Experiences of ONUSAL and MINUGUA, for instance, showed how the publication of periodic reports could become an important political event in the country, generating expectations, advance debates and considerable reactions.

● Thematic reports can set the tone of national debate, forcing abusive parties to deal with a topic they would rather ignore. (Examples include reports on sexu-

al and gender-based violence in Darfur, and reports on child soldiers in Sri Lanka.)

● Special investigations are a particular kind of thematic report. In most cases, there is no possibility that a field mission will respond to or investigate all abuses. Instead, it chooses one or a few emblematic cases for in-depth investigation. These investigations can affect the national and international debate, and the recommendations they yield should affect abuser behaviour towards a whole range of past or potential future victims.

Dissemination: In some missions, there may be too much emphasis on the value of published reports as the main reason for a field presence. In an endeavour where most outcomes are frustratingly intangible, written documents are reassuringly measurable products; however, this solidity is deceptive. A file cabinet full of reports will not change anything. They are useful only insofar as they are acted upon. International missions need a dissemination and publicity strategy to fulfil the potential of their painstaking monitoring and writing. This includes dissemination to the general public, as well as to embassies and other influential circles, so that others with high-level access to abusers may echo the messages and priorities of the mission, backed up by the credibility of the report.

With a sufficient presence deployed, and a good system of periodic reporting and dissemination, a competent mission can earn a unique position as a credible authority on civilian protection needs and rights abuses in a country. The OHCHR mission in Colombia, for instance, has over time become a powerful influence on the national debate on human rights and civilian protection. National NGOs use OHCHR reports – in fact depend on them – and the mission's ongoing series of recommendations guide both national and international pressure for change.

Box 8.2: Evidence for the future

Field mission investigations may yield important data for future trials. KVM data, for instance, contributed to the indictment of Slobodan Milosevic. HRFOR provided initial investigatory data for the subsequent genocide tribunal. Although it is difficult to prove that the prospect of future trials has a deterring impact, it is certainly something that is increasingly on the public agenda. No one in Sudan has been tried yet by the International Criminal Court, for instance, but everyone knows there is a list, and some know they are on it. And, as one African Union monitor noted, 'Nobody wants to spend their old age in prison.'

Working with the media

The use of print, radio, television and web-based media can be a powerful multiplier of a mission's message, both nationally and internationally. Although some small presences choose to stay under the radar, it is generally not in a mission's interest to be unknown or misunderstood, as this tends only to generate suspicion. A good media strategy can help a mission to control its own public image, and to respond actively to detractors.

At the most obvious level, media releases and broadcast public events can publicise a mission's public reports or its positions on critical events. With mission support, local media can promote awareness and encourage the involvement of civil society in the protection and promotion of human rights. For instance, field missions can support and participate in regular programming on the air, and have an interactive presence on the web in the local language. A regular media presence enables different kinds of public messages for deterring abuses, and creates opportunities to support and give a higher public profile to groups in need of protection or reforms in need of support.[17]

Each mission needs to decide how best to work with the media. Here are a few general recommendations.

- There are countless good resources available to help organisations learn to develop and control their contact with the media (see resource box). Use them; don't reinvent the wheel.
- A mission should have press officers with the professional skill to handle public communications. This recruitment should not be an afterthought. These skilled officers should coach other mission members in dealing with the media.
- Handling local media demands fluent local language skills.
- Media strategy must adapt to the local context. For instance, in a country with low literacy, use of the radio can be critical.
- A mission should establish an active relationship with the media, but not to the point of being 'managed' by them.

There are bound to be errors and setbacks in dealing with the media, and a mission needs disciplined guidelines about who talks to journalists, and what they say. But these should not be so excessively restrictive as to prevent necessary and productive public communication. It can be useful to build a network of reliable media contacts by identifying reporters regularly covering your country in the foreign press and establishing personal relationships with the most responsible. International media outlets and journalists need stories, credible experts and reli-

able sources they can contact in times of developing crises. If you want them to use your message, make sure they consider you a credible source and know how to reach you quickly.

VIP visits

Visits from VIPs (very important persons) are key opportunities for influence, with major media attention. Whether the visitor is a politician, pop personality, religious leader, special rapporteur or a whole commission, this is a moment when people are listening, and field missions should exploit these opportunities to promote protection. When state officials meet with external VIPs brought in by the mission, they are sometimes getting access to a contact they would not otherwise make.

When VIPs mention concerns about protection, or mention specific threatened communities or organisations, this gives greater legitimacy and protection to those mentioned. When VIPs visit threatened organisations or communities, the visit becomes a local event that groups can leverage for longer-term benefit. A field presence should encourage and facilitate such visits, and make every effort to coach and guide visitors so that their message and impact is consistent with the mission's strategy.

Public events

A mission can enhance both its image and its protection message through the sponsorship of public events such as celebrations, conferences, memorials, presentations of awards and the like. Such happenings are a good opportunity to stress the positive promotional messages of the mission in the public eye, and they give visibility and legitimacy to both the mission and the groups and local individuals who participate.

Summary

The potential influence of public advocacy on protection is widely recognised. It is not the answer to all problems however, and it comes with certain risks or dilemmas that each organisation needs to evaluate. These include alienation of key contacts and retaliation against the presence or its local contacts

But public advocacy can address these problems and avoid the danger of silence by actively seeking the support of the international community, taking calculated risks and making conscious efforts to keep open the space for dialogue during public criticism. Institutions need to sequence their advocacy messages strategically. They can also benefit sometimes from collaborative advocacy with other protection institutions.

Mission personnel should be familiar with a variety of public advocacy techniques. Public reporting on abuses involves the collection of information, report preparation and dissemination, and take the form of periodic or thematic reports, or special investigations. Working with the media includes developing strategies adapted to the local context, media networking and preparing staff for media contact, plus arranging public events and VIP visits.
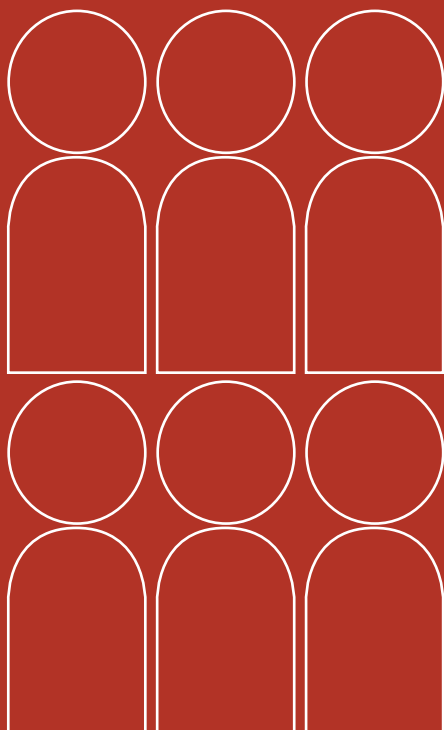
PART THREE
CHALLENGES

9 | DO NO HARM

Every institution operating in conflict zones needs to recognise the high level of uncertainty inherent in its actions. Good intentions do not necessarily yield good outcomes, and examples of errors and unintended consequences are well documented. Field missions need to be constantly alert to this risk, and need to exercise both discipline and good judgement to avoid hurting the people they intend to help.

Six categories of risk for international missions

Individual behaviour and codes of conduct

The behaviour of mission staff has direct consequences for the protection of civilians: individual security lapses can put both the field officer and others at risk; failure to maintain requisite confidentiality can put witnesses and sources under direct threat of reprisal; inappropriate or insulting cultural behaviour can be serious enough to create risks for the field officer or their local associates. Other behaviours may not directly create protection risks, but they can undermine a mission's credibility with local actors. Paternalistic or disrespectful behaviour towards local people must be avoided. Most institutions have codes of conduct to help regulate behaviour, but they often lack rigorous screening processes to prevent predictable problems, or don't enact enforcement procedures in cases of non-compliance.

Insufficient political information and analysis

The process of analysis outlined in Chapter 3 not only helps to create good protection strategies, but also helps to avoid bad ones. It should be self-evident that a

mission is more likely to put itself and its local contacts in danger if it does not have good political analysis and good local sources. But counter-examples abound of missions being highly disconnected from local sources of analysis. Without a multi-faceted network, the mission will not only lack crucial information for avoiding mistakes, but it will also be much more vulnerable to manipulation by a single 'apparently good source', with no point of comparison. Ill-informed missions are much more easily swayed by rumours and uncorroborated information.

International institutions may be injecting substantial resources into the local economy, as happens in large humanitarian operations. Insufficient socio-political analysis can prevent a mission from seeing how resources are being diverted, or possibly contributing to the control of illegitimate leaders.

Lack of learning

Many mistakes are understandable and reasonable – anyone walking into an unpredictable conflict situation is likely to make them. These errors become less justifiable, however, when they are made repeatedly – even within the same organisation or during the same conflict. The lack of clear and organised learning from past mistakes is a key reason why so many mistakes are repeated – sometimes with serious negative consequences for the protection of civilians. (See also the section on learning from the past, in Chapter 11.)

For example, monitoring missions have confronted the risk of reprisals against witnesses for decades, and learned many lessons about witness protection, sometimes as a result of tragic errors that might have been avoided. While there has been some consolidation of guidelines on witness protection within OHCHR, other missions involved in any kind of information gathering on protection often repeat the same mistakes.

Unintended consequences

When a mission has other programming in addition to protection, it needs to ensure that none of the consequences of those programmes adversely affect its protection goals. In many humanitarian organisations, for instance, the role of 'protection officer' is being developed to apply a protection lens to other programming in order to minimise its possible detrimental effects. For instance, humanitarian assistance can be a source of inter-communal conflict over the distribution of resources. The hiring of local partners can have consequences affecting the protection image of a mission, depending on the public image or bias of those partner organisations.

Sometimes, programming or donor pressures cause an assistance effort to be focused on a particular subset of the population. In Darfur, for instance, both the

humanitarian community and the initial OHCHR field presence concentrated nearly all of their initial attention on IDP camps. The consequent marginalisation of the rural people who had not fled their homes provoked a strong perception of favouritism and bias, further fuelling existing inter-ethnic resentment.

A short-term solution to a serious problem can have negative long-term costs or side effects. In a case of conflict-caused destitution in Darfur, for instance, large providers of relief resources such as WFP, ICRC and UNHCR quickly became the most powerful economic players in the region. This made them an attractive target for infiltration by armed groups and government alike. In addition, such a massive economic infusion in a crisis must be accompanied by a long-term analysis of its implications for the economic and political future of the entire region – something that seldom occurs.

Similarly, an electoral monitoring mission may find that the local technical capacity for administering an election resides primarily within certain elite groups or particular ethnic groups. The mission needs these skills, yet this programming objective could collide with a need to project an unbiased approach.

Key resource on avoiding negative impacts

Mary B. Anderson's *Do No Harm: How aid can support peace – or war* calls attention to the diverse negative impacts of the operations of the international relief community. The Do No Harm manuals and parallel workshops developed practical programming recommendations, in particular to avoid the risk of international aid and presence unintentionally fuelling violent conflict, and to ensure that aid supports local capacities for peacemaking and conflict reduction. These lessons are still of vital importance to both the humanitarian community and all other institutions operating in conflict zones.

The book is available from Lynne Rienner publishers (http://www.rienner. com/viewbook.cfm?BOOKID=88&search=do%20no%20harm). For more information on the Do No Harm project and workshops see the web-page of the Collaborative for Development Action (www.cdainc.com).

Undermining local efforts

One of the most important benefits of networking and thorough analysis is to allow a mission to respond to immediate attacks against civilians and needs, while also strengthening the long-term capacity of a community to protect itself. Unfortunately, international actors often distrust well-organised communities, fearing them to be politically biased or in some cases corrupt. Still, they are the only

civil structures available for the people. Bypassing these entities for short-term efficiency may be costly. For instance, promoting an international tribunal in a transitional situation may result in greater due-process guarantees, but supporting a nationally based judicial process might do more for the long-term establishment of the rule of law.

An international monitoring mission, for instance, may have the best of intentions when it takes over from national actors the collection of human-rights data – such work might indeed be extremely dangerous for local people. Nevertheless, the risk exists that such substitution will weaken civil society's capacity to develop its own monitoring mechanisms to keep its government accountable. Large missions – such as in Kosovo – may find that they have drafted the entire educated local elite into UN service positions, completely disabling the society's capacity to achieve a post-intervention equilibrium. Every mission needs to develop the capacity to analyse the long-term possibilities of local structures before jumping in to substitute for them, and could sometimes develop hybrid solutions.

Risk of reprisal

> 'We have to be very careful in speaking with people in the communities. Not because we think they are linked with armed groups, but because we know that those groups are watching to see with whom the community speaks. We have seen examples of retaliation afterwards. And in a small village there are no secrets. Everyone knows who talked to whom.'
>
> Humanitarian field officer in Colombia

If an armed party regards an international presence as an obstacle to its objectives, one of the least costly ways to undermine the presence is through reprisals against its more vulnerable local contacts. When HRFOR staff distributed a questionnaire in a prison, and then made the mistake of leaving copies in the prison, those who completed the questionnaire received harsher treatment. In Sri Lanka, civilians who report any problems with the LTTE are routinely harassed and threatened, so much so that the majority of complainants will not allow their names to be used or their cases to be followed up. A Muslim member of an SLMM local monitoring committee was reportedly forced to pull out after death threats from the LTTE. Tamils fear to speak of problems in groups, for fear of the LTTE finding out. A history of harassment and reprisal by Sri Lanka state security forces also adds to the dynamic of fear that prevents the mission from following up on most cases.

> ❝ 'Once the international presence is gone, there tends to be a reaction, because the paramilitaries see the contact with internationals as a challenge to their control. So the international accompaniment needs to be a little more permanent.'
>
> Local activist, Colombia

Despite concerns about reprisals, most activists believe that international visits are necessary and helpful, and that the net protective result for communities visited by an international mission is positive. Missions must find ways to minimise the risk of reprisal without curtailing protective action. This often involves avoiding naming local sources in public reports. Sometimes, on public visits, a mission will focus its itinerary on talking to authorities, allowing local civilians to seek more discreet means of contacting the mission, such as through more private meetings away from the eyes of the community.

People often feel that a commitment of follow-up and future visits is some protection against retaliation. NGOs point out that ongoing humanitarian and development contacts with communities are one type of permanent accompaniment that helps, since armed parties will know at least that whatever they do will be noted in the next visit. More importantly, a field mission needs to listen to the local organisations and witnesses, and honour their concerns about security and discretion.

> ❝ 'The most dangerous thing is arrogance. You have to enter into relationships and dialogue with some sense of humility and respect and caution.'
>
> Mission field officer

Key resource on protecting witnesses and sources

A particularly sensitive need is to protect witnesses and key sources that provide information to a field mission about abuses and perpetrators. The OHCHR is developing a detailed manual on this:

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Handbook for Human Rights* and Humanitarian Practitioners on the Protection of Persons cooperating with them in sensitive environments, draft, forthcoming.

In the polarised and volatile setting of a conflict zone, however, no level of effective presence can eliminate entirely the risk of retaliation. The international presence by nature or design encourages people to organise and take risks, and therefore inevitably increases some vulnerabilities even as it adds protection, as shown in the model described in Chapter 2. There will always be mistakes, miscalculations and unintended consequences. The field mission and local organisations should be trying to analyse these dynamics together to minimise the risk and discourage excessive risk-taking, even as they recognise the need to act where necessary.

Summary

Field missions can take deliberate steps to minimise the risk of negative impacts from their presence.

- Codes of conduct should be created, taught in staff training and used to monitor behaviour and enforce compliance.
- Thorough analysis should consider possible negative impacts: this may involve an extra effort to predict and avert unplanned consequences of the mission's actions.
- Lessons from experience should be learned and taught: learning from past mistakes is the only way to avoid repeating them.
- Multiple and sometimes contradictory institutional agendas in complex programming should all be considered. There may be a risk of negative protection consequences from other programming not directly related to protection.
- Strategies and operational plans should be chosen to sustain communities; it can be very damaging to substitute for local expertise or undermine local structures.
- Extreme care is needed to avoid putting local staff and contacts at risk. The mission should defend these contacts and sources from any threats.

10 | THE SECURITY CHALLENGE
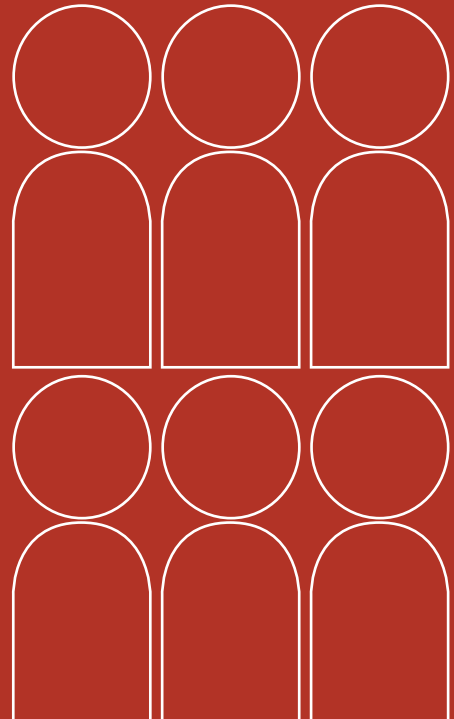
Promoting security and smart risk-taking

A field mission in a conflict zone is inevitably a dangerous undertaking. International missions have suffered threats and attacks too numerous to list. In Rwanda in 1997, for instance, five HRFOR personnel were killed, and other staff members received death threats for taking on sensitive cases. UNAMET had at least 14 local Timorese staff murdered, and local militia leaders kidnapped MINUGUA observers. National personnel of international NGOs have been killed in Darfur. In other settings, international staff members have endured a variety of serious abuses, including ransom kidnapping. Yet even these casualties pale in comparison to the losses of international personnel in conflicts such as Iraq. Clearly, a field mission must prepare competent staff candidates with seasoned security strategies for the risks they may face.

There are many resources available on staff security in conflict zones, which this manual will not try to replicate (see Key resources). Every mission needs to make sure that it studies such guidelines, and prepares its own mission-specific security analysis based on particular political and local conditions. Staff members must have the opportunity to study these, and there should be a process of ensuring discipline in their implementation.

Security preparations cannot eliminate risk, however. A protection mission unwilling to take risks would achieve nothing, and the mission's risks are usually few in comparison to the dangers facing local civilians. When international personnel go where the local people are in the greatest danger, their own risk factors naturally increase, but so does their protective impact.

Therefore, security strategies should promote *smart* risk-taking. A mission will make the greatest difference when it gets out of the safe neighbourhoods of the main cities, and makes itself present where the trouble is, interacting with victims as well as perpetrators. Security strategies must make this interaction as safe as possible, but should not prevent it, where the risk can be mitigated. Thus, for

Key resources on field security

Cutts, Mark and Alan Dingle. *Safety First: Protecting NGO employees who work in areas of conflict*. Save the Children, 1998.

Eguren, Enrique. *Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders*. Dublin: Peace Brigades International and Frontline, 2006. (Available at http://www.protectionline.org).

Lloyd Roberts, David. *Staying Alive: Safety and security guidelines for humanitarian volunteers in conflict areas.* Geneva: ICRC, 2006.

Generic Security Guide for Humanitarian Organisations. ECHO, 2004 (http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/evaluation/security_review_en.htm).

Security in the Field. New York: Office of the United Nations Security Co-ordinator, 1998 (Available at http://www.unep.org/restrict/security/security.doc).

instance, in KVM and UNAMET, the default assumption was that the risks were manageable. Whenever possible, these missions responded to calls for help, travelled to sensitive or dangerous locations to be seen and heard, to talk down the threatening abusers and show solidarity with frightened civilians.[18] Military and police expertise helped to enable the missions to manage risk.

Key factors in a mission security analysis

Among the key factors contributing to a mission's security analysis are: political analysis, transparency with armed actors, mission neutrality, a network of local allies and support from international allies, and early response to warnings or initial attacks. We will look at each of these in turn.

Political analysis

The many important technical and practical security guidelines available are not fixed recipes, but rather ingredients of a security strategy that must be devised for a particular political context. Security choices are inextricably linked to a mission's political analysis. In Haiti, MICIVIH personnel in 1993/4 were surrounded by violence, but their analysis concluded that the mission itself was not a target. This analysis enabled mission staff to participate in delicate cases and trips that had protective impact.

When its personnel were murdered in Rwanda, allegedly by a disgruntled or renegade *Interhamwe* rebel, HRFOR lacked sufficient information to analyse the implications of the attack. Its cautious reaction, therefore, was quickly to reduce its

rural presence, leaving a vacuum during a time of vulnerable refugee returns. More information or a different analysis might have yielded a different reaction.

In Colombia there were two separate instances of political attacks on expatriates – one by the FARC rebel group in which three North American activists were killed, and another by AUC paramilitaries in which a Spanish NGO worker was killed. If the analysis of these events had suggested a trend or a strategy by either armed group to attack expatriate presence, it would have had a serious inhibiting effect on all protective missions in Colombia. But, in both cases, analysts concurred that these attacks were political mistakes, and that the FARC and the AUC paid a serious political cost in each case, and would be unlikely to repeat the error. Thus, the attacks did not significantly change the security analysis for other foreign personnel in these regions.

Because it is so dependent on political context, security strategy is not easily transferable. Depending on the possible motivations of the armed parties to harm a mission, what might seem rash in one conflict could be perfectly safe in another. But if a mission lacks a rigorous analysis, everything might appear risky (and indeed could be), and the uncertainties can lead to excessively conservative decisions about risk-taking, with the effect of limiting protective opportunities. Security assessments need to be kept up to date. In some settings, 'no-go' areas remain off-limits even after the actual security situation has improved. This means that the population in danger in those areas is not benefiting from international presence, even though presence is possible.

Transparency with armed actors

Transparent relationships with armed parties are crucial for good security strategies. A mission should not provoke unnecessary fears by being unpredictable in a conflict zone. Some missions make it a standard practice to give local police and military authorities advance notice of all their movements. A mission should be just as transparent with armed groups. Communication is a sign of respect; it helps to overcome polarised stereotypes that may exist about the mission, and it may avert the risk of the armed group making other misjudgements about the mission. It should not be assumed that an armed group has a realistic understanding of a mission and its role if this is not communicated to them.

Where direct communication is prevented by circumstances beyond the control of the mission, this needs to be recognised as a potentially serious security risk. Where possible, indirect means of communication should be developed, while advocacy efforts should seek to overcome any political blocks to direct communication. For instance, in Colombia, UN and NGO missions are legally prohibited from contact with illegal armed groups. When they are operating in terrain controlled by these parties – which they must do frequently – they cannot give any direct advance notice of their movements or intentions. The OHCHR reports on

state, paramilitary and guerrilla abuses, but does so without talking to either of the latter two.

An international presence sometimes uses the media or informal contacts with civil-society groups to broadcast indirectly their motives, objectives and even their movements. Sometimes direct contact with representatives of armed groups is possible outside the country even though it is prohibited in the national territory. Lacking the ability to give advance notice or describe intentions directly, mission field staff tend to put a heavy trust in these armed groups' capacity for surveillance and intelligence gathering, often assuming that they already know what they are not being told. However, this is not a safe assumption.

Neutrality

In a polarised situation, any perceived alliance with one military institution makes you a potential target of their enemy, as attacks on UN staff in Iraq tragically proved. In Darfur or Colombia, for instance, humanitarians bringing assistance into guerrilla-controlled territory have to be careful that they are not labelled as guerrillas themselves.

Local and international allies

An informal network of trusted local informants can be crucial to mission safety. These allies provide analysis of dangers facing the mission, and at times can pass on discreet warnings to mission personnel about expected events. External political support can provide a key safety net for mission staff, especially if those considering an attack take political costs into account. UNAMET, for example, was able to generate a steadily increasing flow of international messages of pressure in response to escalating security incidents, leaving no doubt about the level of international support it enjoyed.

Early response

Attacks and threats to a mission are sometimes part of a campaign to undermine its work or provoke its departure. Attacks may start small, and gradually escalate. They should be addressed early. Unfortunately, a mission may tend to discount the importance of the first threats, reserving a response until greater harm is done. But a vigorous early response can succeed in stopping the escalation. For example, in 2004, the Uribe government in Colombia launched an aggressive campaign of de-legitimisation against Peace Brigades International (PBI), the largest NGO protective presence in the country. PBI had to respond with one of the highest-profile campaigns of international political support in its history to secure its ongoing presence and stop a further escalation of threats.

> " 'There is a need for an organised response to a threat or an attack against a protection operation… A protection operation must create that capacity to show its teeth and, if necessary, to use them and bite back quickly: its protection depends on its capacity to hurt… In Cambodia, after the first attack against us (armed men kidnapped the 5-year-old daughter of our administrator, shot a bullet in her thigh and dropped her in a dark street in the centre of the capital), we created an immediate response network which involved the local press corps, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the local/regional correspondents of the New York Times, Washington Post, Asian Wall Street Journal and several other large newspapers, key UN contacts in NY, and senior officials in different foreign ministries. There were not many, but a short briefing note or a few phone calls were sufficient to mobilise a massive response which scared the government and made it understand the simple message: 'OHCHR: hands off.' We did the same with the human-rights NGO community when it came under attack, with the simple message: 'Touching them is touching us'. There were no further attacks against us or our Cambodian human-rights colleagues in the years I was there.'
>
> OHCHR field officer

Deteriorating security conditions

What does a mission do when a situation deteriorates and risks increase? Evacuation is always an option, but a mission needs to have other measures of 'self-defence' in place that will strengthen its security and allow it to continue to offer protection. There was strong feedback from most respondents in research for this manual about the need for perseverance. Above all, this requires a politically astute mission leadership that will wisely analyse changing risks and ratchet up the preventive political response, demonstrating what the potential international cost will be if the mission or those under its protection are touched.

> " 'Deteriorating situations are where we most need presence.'
>
> OSCE field officer

In essence, the role of a mission remains the same when conditions deteriorate.

● It is still there to monitor and protect, and, if things are getting worse, more people in the international community are probably listening. The mission can thus help negotiators and policy makers to make informed and effective decisions.

- The field presence continues to be a real-time local voice of international concern, informing the parties on the ground, right down the chain of command, of increasing concerns and steps that may be taken.
- Everyone understands that an attack on an expatriate provokes a greater response than an attack on a local person. The international presence raises the stakes both for the armed parties, who must take greater care, and for international actors who will be under greater pressure to act if something happens to the mission.

All this requires, however, that the international community actually supports the mission, and increases this support when it is under fire. As described in Chapter 8 on public advocacy, the mission should be proactively eliciting such support and attention from the international community.

Unfortunately, field officers have often felt that they could not count on such systemic support and that their missions' continued existence was precarious. Several field officers in Colombia, for instance, suggested that a single, major security setback, such as the killing of a UN worker, could lead to a pull-out of the whole UN presence. They had no confidence that a co-ordinated or robust international response would back them up. If they were right, this suggests a dangerously weak level of international commitment. If their fears were exaggerated, it is still a serious problem: an expectation of weak support that could be self-fulfilling, since the mission may not demand the backing it deserves. Projecting weakness can even invite attacks on a mission, if its detractors believe they can easily intimidate it into leaving. Furthermore, mission personnel are burdened by the fear that 'my mistake will end the mission', and this inhibits daily choices about risk-taking and protection.

Sometimes we see an escalation of harassment against international staff or organisations on the ground, starting with the weaker partners. Larger international missions need to respond actively and firmly to any harassment of their own personnel, or those of partner organisations. They should also have assertive, system-wide responses to harassment of other agency or NGO staff members. The 'message' in responding to harassment of international workers should link staff safety with general civilian safety, rather than implying that it is more important to protect international personnel than other civilians.

National personnel and security strategies

National personnel are integral to a mission and its security. They must be selected with care, and their special protection needs must be considered carefully. They can also be a key source of information, analysis and wisdom, directly protecting the less-informed expatriates. Some international institutions are now employing

increasingly higher proportions of local staff. In the protection field, though, there are strengths to the expatriate role, which provides a particular kind of protection to its national colleagues.

Always a delicate procedure, staff selection should never be rushed. It should shun ethnic or political bias, considering the security implications for a mission's credibility, and guard against infiltration. Finally, and equally important in selection of national staff as expatriate field officers, there are basic 'good security' characteristics of caution, discretion, and a sense of humility.

Special security vulnerabilities

National mission personnel and the mission strategists overall need to prepare together for the different security realities faced by national staff members. Consider this blatant example of higher-risk exposure described by a UN officer with experience in East Timor:

> 'In military documents planning for the referendum, the first priority mentioned is security for the international observers. Way down the list is the goal of protecting the Timorese; 12 or 13 Timorese UN workers were killed. In one case when a few national staff were killed, the UN went in with a helicopter to get the ballot boxes. The Indonesian military man they talked to clearly knew in advance about the planned attack. They asked him, "Why didn't you stop it?" He replied, "I told them clearly: don't harm the internationals." He seemed to think that ought to be enough for us. The orders were clear.'
>
> UNAMET field officer

To minimise these vulnerabilities, most presences choose to keep national and expatriate roles distinct, reserving the more delicate protection and intervention roles (such as ICRC delegate or UN human-rights observer) for expatriates, and using national personnel in tasks of promotion, assistance or mission support. As one field worker put it, referring to national personnel, 'The closer to combat, the less we expose them.' Yet, even in the most vulnerable locations, the expatriates nearly always travel with a local driver, who needs to be trained for minimal diplomatic responses when coming into contact with authorities or armed parties.

Systematic and adequate concern for national staff security has been a weakness of international missions, though there has been some progress. For instance, in October 1993, MICIVIH evacuated from Haiti with no security provision or follow-up for Haitian national personnel or local collaborators, a failure that to this day still evinces traumatised emotional responses from some mission personnel.

Whereas in 1999, surrounded by angry militia in a walled compound in Dili, UNAMET staff held firm, resisting and re-negotiating evacuation decisions until the security and the evacuation of Timorese staff and IDPs in the compound could be assured. Nevertheless, in some missions visited in 2005 there were still no special procedures in place for national staff security in the event of evacuation.

There are no easy solutions – and sometimes the options for protection of national personnel after a mission leaves are quite limited. Nevertheless, this is all the more reason to think them through carefully in advance. Options such as leaving vehicles and communication equipment behind, identifying safe houses, or organising systematic check-ins and follow-up, for instance, all require planning and advance commitment. Similar security planning should be happening for a mission's key local contacts, witnesses and sources.

Local staff security advice

One dynamic often overlooked is the extent to which national personnel and local collaborators directly protect the mission and the expatriates. As one UNHCR field worker insisted: 'The national staff you travel with are critical. They have better sense. They learn more. They have to be carefully chosen.' Local personnel, being more familiar with the local culture and politics, pick up cues the outsider misses. Stories proliferate of discreet warnings alerting expatriates to danger. International organisations that secure the services of expert local analysts have a potential gold-mine of security advice, which, if used, will prevent mistakes and improve their overall mission strategies.

Summary

Security strategies need to promote smart risk-taking, enabling active protection strategies for the most vulnerable civilians. This demands:

- contextual political analysis of local security realities, rather than transferring rigid rules from other settings
- transparency and respectful relationships with armed actors
- a good network of local allies
- strong support from international allies
- commitment to early response to warnings or initial attacks, before they escalate.

When the security situation is deteriorating, the mission will need to take extra measures of political self-defence, also encouraging increased international political support, recognising that its protective value for vulnerable civilians will be especially important at such times. Special preparation is required to ensure national staff security, taking into account the increased vulnerability of national mission personnel and associates.

11 | INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES
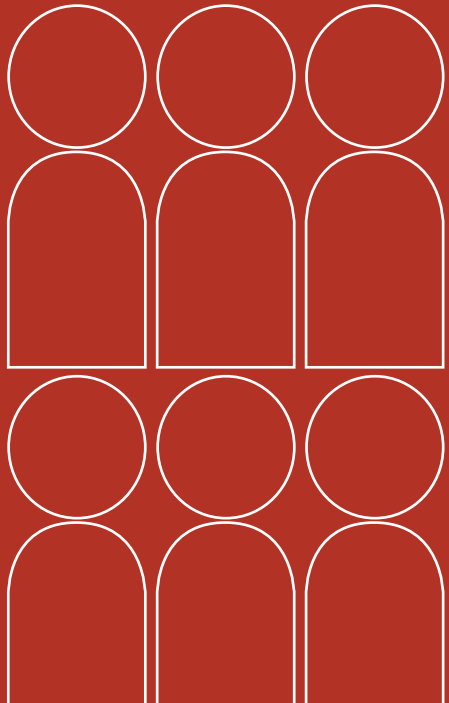
Every field mission studied in research for this manual has suffered from some combination of serious and avoidable weaknesses. These include: insufficient resources, training or preparation; poor analysis; and inadequate international or institutional support. Given what the missions achieved despite such weaknesses, one cannot help but wonder how successful they would be if these challenges were overcome.

If an institution is going to create effective field missions to achieve protection for civilians, it may need to make some hard choices. Sometimes, institutional changes and some new structures and processes may be required. This chapter will examine the challenges of meeting the following crucial institutional objectives:

- take a committed approach
- get the right entry agreement – and stretch it
- make the mission big enough
- use the right mix of skills
- provide adequate and appropriate training
- care for morale and mental health
- learn from the past and build for the future.

Take a committed approach

> 'It is better to be unarmed in this situation.'
>
> Military officer serving in SLMM

While excessive optimism is not helpful, it is essential to have a realistic view of the strengths of any given approach in order to use it to the fullest. Unfortunately, there

are some prevailing attitudes that limit many institutions' and individual field officers' capacity and confidence to carry out effective protection strategies. First, there is a tendency not to claim credit for the protection that unarmed missions have successfully brought about, because this seems to contradict the general high regard for the protective power of the gun. 'Well, we couldn't really protect anyone, because we were unarmed', was a frequent comment from interviewees. But those making this comment would then invariably share numerous examples in which their interventions changed outcomes, and protected people.

This attitude sends a signal of impotence. If a mission or its staff project the belief that an unarmed presence only indicates the international system's reluctance to deploy an armed presence, it weakens respect for the mission, and thereby its power. Preventive impact is linked so inextricably to perceptions that this inevitably has self-fulfilling consequences. If a mission does not believe in its own effectiveness, why should anyone else?

This is not to discount the potential value of an armed component to a mission. In Darfur, for example, there was strong positive feedback from civilians about the protective role of the African Union's armed patrols, and UNMIS human-rights monitors have an escort arrangement with African Union troops for some situations. But in many other situations, field officers and local respondents alike pointed out that an unarmed presence was sometimes more dissuasive against violence than an armed one. And they caution against the assumption that an armed presence necessarily has positive consequences. Field officers doing unarmed monitoring often prefer not to have military escort, since this limits their activities. In some cases, mission staff felt that had their military observers or civilian police been carrying weapons, there would have been a high likelihood of shoot-outs between mission staff and local armed players, potentially resulting in deaths or provoking a political crisis for the mission.

> ❝ 'It is much better to have civilian missions separate from the blue helmets. It complicates things – the people confuse one with the other. Here in Colombia [with no UN military], it is clear. But in other places, a human-rights officer accompanied by the military can appear to be an offence against someone's sense of sovereignty. It is better to go alone. I don't think they offer us increased protection... In Rwanda it was much better for us [HRFOR] after the military mission left; before that, we were always being confused with them.'
>
> Field officer with experience in Rwanda, Angola and Colombia

Unarmed and armed presences are two distinct tools, to be used independently or in combination, according to the political possibilities available for intervention. Both tools have strengths and weaknesses. The international community needs to

develop its approaches based on a more nuanced appreciation of different intervention strategies and their relevance to varying contexts, avoiding the oversimplified assumption that the military option is the only 'real' protection.

Second, beyond the comparison to armed strategies, there is a more generalised sense of failure and futility within most inter-governmental organisations, which serves to underestimate further the impact of the field missions. Because conflict situations do not necessarily improve, or local actors do not always pay sufficient attention to the international community and sometimes even flaunt their disdain, mission representatives can make the mistake of assuming they have little or no impact.

Third, in situations where there are multiple international institutions in the field, each with a potential for protection, there is a widespread tendency to de-legitimise and criticise the efforts of other institutions. This destroys the potential that these allies should have for collaborative and complementary strategies. It creates a natural vulnerability to 'divide-and-conquer' strategies by actors who wish to undermine international protection efforts. Protection institutions need the internal discipline to control these turf battles and demand an attitude of respect and collaboration from their own staff towards other institutions.

A sense of futility and impotence in the face of widespread violence can be an occupational hazard. It can be heightened by widespread problems of institutional morale, in which people question deeply and criticise the political will of their own institution, its organisation and management. These concerns prompt fear, pain, cynicism and other emotions that all contribute to the underestimation of impact. Attitudes that discount the value of unarmed presence can influence policy decisions, resulting in reduced willingness to deploy such missions. Modesty and humility can be great qualities for both individuals and institutions, especially in international and cross-cultural settings. But, just as blind optimism is naïve, the underestimation of impact can lead to bad strategic choices, resulting in missed opportunities for protection.

Getting the right entry agreement – and then stretching it

A mission's negotiated memorandum of understanding, agreement with the host government or other formal agreement calling for its presence, can either enhance or weaken its options for protection. A wide range of options must be kept open, not only in the formal agreements negotiated with the host state or armed groups, but also in the internal institutional dialogue about 'who we are and what we do'. This demands an approach that seeks maximum room to manoeuvre within any formal agreements.

Ideally, a field presence will negotiate formal, principle-based agreements giving it the broadest range of possible strategies and methodologies to best meet the protection needs of the population. Ideally, these should include, for instance:

- full and unimpeded access to the entire territory
- unconstrained communication with any party in the government, military or armed groups and among civilians, including access to detainees
- commitments by armed parties to communicate and meet with the mission, and to respond to enquiries
- commitments by the armed parties to support the mission politically and refrain from actions or statements that would undermine it or put it at risk
- a clear legal framework, with the authority of international law and treaty agreements
- unlimited right to gather information
- no limits or censorship of public statements or reports
- commitments by the parties for the security of the mission, but no limits put on the mission also meeting its own security needs
- commitments by the parties that persons who have contact with the mission will not be detained, questioned, placed under surveillance or otherwise bullied
- the right to choose and prioritise technical-support tasks in the context of the mission's own protection strategy
- technical agreements facilitating logistical support and provision of the mission, so that blockages cannot be used to paralyse it (including the use of specified radio frequencies and importation of necessary equipment without taxation or other fees).

The negotiation environment is never perfect, of course. But when these entry conditions are not met, the mission planners need to be acutely aware of the potential costs to the mission. A mission with limited access to territory or civilian groups, or without the ability to investigate atrocities, risks serious illegitimacy. Mission negotiators need to understand how to use international legal standards to insist upon certain minimum operating conditions for a mission's presence.

> 'When you have poor agreements to back up the presence, then the need for a very multi-skilled civilian presence increases dramatically. In this case, the fact that the GOI [Government of Indonesia] was responsible for security was a fatal flaw, putting all the protection burden on us, with little to back it up.'
>
> UNAMET field officer

A field presence also has an implicit mandate based on what it believes it can do without excessive negative repercussions – a limit determined by the nature of the armed parties and the level of international political back-up the mission can count on. Thus for instance, KVM had the most vague of written mandates to 'verify' a ceasefire that was not even agreed to by both warring parties. But with backing

from the OSCE and NATO it took a very liberal view of that mandate. As one observer put it, 'We had to "spin" protection and prevention as "verification".' And spin they did, putting into practice a very activist protection identity.

UNAMET had no explicit human-rights mandate, and civilian security was formally in the hands of Indonesian authorities, but the mission had sufficient international support, and commitment on the part of its own staff, to take a similarly activist protection approach.

> 'There was no clear consensus on the mandate… We were perhaps lucky our staff were sufficiently foolish to behave as they did – outgoing and interventionist. We did whatever it took, and had coverage for it.'
>
> UNAMET field officer

> 'You hear of an attack? You jump in the jeep and go stop it. Once the CivPol guy tried to stop us: "We don't do this. We are not the local police." We ignored him. We were the police, in fact, as the police were not doing their job of protecting people. Maybe this level of intervention was crazy. But we saw it as part of our mandate.'
>
> UNAMET field officer

The point here is not that protection staff should devise independent strategies that contradict institutional mandates, but rather to emphasise that if a field mission has sufficient willingness, moral authority, and political support from its institutional headquarters, in practice it can have greater control over the interpretation of formal agreements, and thus much greater flexibility to engage in proactive protection.

Nevertheless, the nature of the state and armed groups will limit a mission's ability to stretch the envelope.

- ONUSAL and MINUGUA, for instance, both had mandates determined by peace negotiations, but were differently affected by the different dynamics of power among the parties. ONUSAL personnel felt that they had the freedom to pursue a much more activist and interventionist role, because the Salvadoran state was weaker than its Guatemalan counterpart, in relation to both the respective guerrilla movements and the international community.
- In Haiti the weakness of local governmental structures allowed for relatively flexible and effective local interventions in individual cases.
- Rwanda was literally re-creating a governmental system after the genocide, and this situation of flux gave the mission staff many opportunities to offer 'helpful suggestions' that could affect the treatment of prisoners.

- UNHCR personnel in Sri Lanka, operating under a mandate for helping refugees and internally displaced people, read this as a mandate to respond to abductions of almost any civilians, on the grounds that the dynamic of abduction and forced recruitment was an important obstacle to the return of refugees and IDPs to their places of origin.

With non-state armed groups, the concept of an entry agreement, memorandum of understanding (MOU) or mandate is often much more ambiguous. If a mission is unable to negotiate an agreement that allows it to relate to armed groups that may be committing violations in the country, it faces a political and security dilemma. If it ignores abuses by armed groups, it will be accused of partisanship. But, as with a state, any public criticism of an armed party's behaviour should be accompanied by some attempt to engage in dialogue. Otherwise, armed groups may misunderstand the mission and stereotype it as an enemy.

In transitional negotiation situations such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Darfur and Sri Lanka, this dialogue was permissible. But in non-transitional situations of conflict, contact with armed groups is harder to secure, and sometimes explicitly prohibited. In Colombia, for instance, the OHCHR documents and reports on guerrilla abuses, but is prohibited from any direct communication, and some observers felt that this was a serious security risk for them. Ideally, a mission should try to achieve a similar level of clarity with an armed group as with a government: a clear and transparent MOU giving the mission a flexible authority to do its work.

Making the mission big enough

Arguably, even a very small field presence can carry out many protection tasks, and have an incremental impact on the particular cases it focuses on. However, a large mission can also aim to make a bigger change in the overall conflict.

- A large presence affects the national consciousness and becomes a player not to be ignored. Its local actions will thus have greater weight and more authority.
- Numerous individual and incremental protection efforts – at each moment, in each locality or on each thematic area – accumulate, and reinforce each other. Ideally, this combined effect creates a momentum that changes attitudes and behaviours.
- A large presence is more difficult for national actors to manipulate. A small mission, for instance, may serve a positive public-relations function for a host state but without significantly curtailing its policies that hurt civilians.

How large a presence is necessary? Setting the optimal mission size is a complicated challenge. It will be affected by:

- the size of the country
- the population
- the number of ongoing abuses
- the scale and nature of combat
- security risks
- transportation and other logistical factors
- the variety of tasks the mission engages in
- levels of collaboration and complementarity with other institutions.

For instance, in Darfur the vast area of the territory and the difficulty of travel require more people to ensure adequate coverage. HRFOR had people in most prefectures, but, due to the heavy work schedule, observers seldom made their presence known in rural areas outside the major towns where they were stationed, unless responding to crises. Figure 11.1 gives some rough comparisons of the scale of different missions relative to the population served and land area covered. Interviews with field staff and management suggest that some missions were judged to be 'big enough' in terms of personnel and deployment of sub-offices – including ONUSAL, MINUGUA, MICIVIH, HRFOR and UNAMET. The KVM was vastly larger than the rest, and arguably too large.

Figure 11.1:

The comparative scale of international field missions
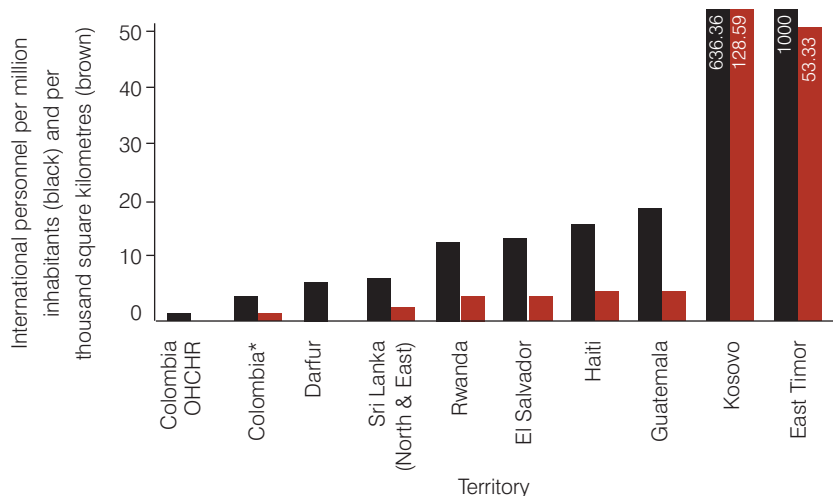
*includes OHCHR, ICRC, UNHCR and PBI

In Colombia, the OHCHR had only 28 international staff members and 52 national personnel during the period of this study, and only three sub-offices outside Bogotá. The four largest international organisations with some protection mandate in Colombia, OHCHR, UNHCR, ICRC, and PBI, had a combined total staff of about 160 internationals. Considering that Colombia has a population and area greater than the total of El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Rwanda, Kosovo and East Timor combined, that the conflict affects the entire territory, and that levels of abuse are high, these numbers are very low compared to those for other missions studied. The international protective presence is still largely absent in much of the country, a concern noted by most of the civil-society respondents interviewed.

Most of the Sri Lankans interviewed – including some members of the armed forces – consider the SLMM presence too small and in need of expansion. Interestingly, though, with the huge international humanitarian presence that arrived in the conflict zone after the 2004 tsunami, some respondents commented, 'We don't really need more foreign presence here.' However, since much of that humanitarian relief presence was *not* carrying out proactive protection functions, the SLMM and other protection actors remain overwhelmed.

In the missions in which size was not reported as a serious problem, there were at least 15 expatriate international observers per million people in the affected conflict zone. In Colombia there are fewer than five per million, even when combining the four separate institutions. Similarly, the larger missions had about four observers or more per thousand square kilometres, while the density of presence in Colombia lags far behind.

The preceding chapters' analysis, though, proposes a more comprehensive range of activities than most missions have engaged in, and this would necessarily require more human resources. So even a mission size previously considered 'adequate' might better be considered as a minimum, if these recommendations are to be implemented fully.

Using the right mix of skills

Management

There is general agreement that a mission needs strong leadership, with good political strategic judgement, diplomatic skills and the courage to stand up for the identity and integrity of a mission and its principles. But beyond this, mission leaders must simply be good managers, able to maximise the potential of a large organisation and provide leadership and guidance to a large staff. Mission leaders must also be able to advocate to ensure that a mission is getting the resource support and political coverage it needs in order to function.

Some missions have suffered from poor management or rapid turnover of leadership. HRFOR, for instance, had five mission leaders in less than four years. It is a

particular challenge for a fast deployment – a mission conceived to respond to a crisis – to find the right leadership. The sponsoring institutions need a roster of qualified mission leaders and managers, ready to be called upon in crisis. Also, in order to consider and plan missions, and ensure consistent quality, the institution needs a high-level manager dedicated and available for their creation. Otherwise, this task is sidelined and not given the attention it requires, and handed to someone without mission-planning experience. Such a designated manager might if necessary perform the role of chief of mission in a new presence, until another qualified appointment can be made.

The same managerial and leadership skills are also needed at the helm of each sub-office. In contrast to a headquarters position, field managers often have to create their own functional structure from scratch, adapt institutional strategies to local conditions and personalities, and manage local and national staff.

Composition of a field presence

There is a strong argument for a mission of mixed professions, to maximise protective impact by taking advantage of each profession's strengths, especially within the UN system. Civilian police forces, for instance, have experience in handling violent incidents, crisis response and security management. Political officers should come with an ability to handle the strategic analysis needed to guide a mission's activities and develop its diplomatic approaches to different actors. Human-rights monitors can recognise and analyse complex dynamics of abuse within a legal framework, helping a mission to create response strategies and credible public reports that build momentum for change.

Complex UN missions have generally recruited from all of these professions, and have used personnel with diverse experience in a variety of roles. In contrast, non-UN ceasefire missions such as KVM and SLMM were heavily military in composition; OHCHR missions focused solely on human-rights monitors.

Some mixed missions have made very effective use of the combination of civilian political staff or human-rights monitors and international Civilian Police (CivPol). The civilian police, at best, come already trained for rapid reaction and direct intervention in tense situations, with an ability to relate to their counterparts among local authorities. In UNAMET, there was a CivPol presence in every local team, and officers were directly involved in rapid intervention in cases of threats and attacks on Timorese villages and activists. Currently, Australia has developed an 'International Deployment Group' of 500 Civilian Police prepared for rapid deployment to conflicts in the region, which recently played an important role in the post-conflict transition in the Solomon Islands.

Each profession has its strengths, and its limitation. Such a mix will work best if the mission also institutes internal lesson-learning processes to share skills among people coming from different backgrounds. If the roles are too isolated and this

learning and sharing does not occur, the result could be the 'worst of all worlds' in which each profession makes the mistakes it is not trained to avoid.

In planning mission composition, some attention should be paid to other kinds of balance as well, in order to control perceptions of bias and extend the range of relationships a mission can build. This includes a mix of gender, age and nationality. Nationality balance can affect a mission in a variety of ways: some people may trust or distrust some field officers because of their nationality; field officers may be perceived to 'represent' the political power and clout of their home country, contributing to the political calculations of local actors; local people may distrust a mission whose racial composition is too different from their own; or, in contrast, they may distrust citizens of nearby states based on past conflicts. These considerations need to be taken into account.

Gender diversity and awareness

The differential impact of armed violence on women and girls is well documented; the fact that the overwhelming number of combatants and security-force personnel who threaten civilians are men (or teenage boys) in itself will present particular risks. Further, continued systemic discrimination on the basis of gender is likely to be present in many countries where a field mission deploys, and this too will have a dramatic impact on patterns of violence and the ability of affected communities to respond.

International staff deployed to protect civilians must be adequately prepared to ensure that gender-specific violence and persecution are anticipated and addressed. This suggests not only gender-sensitive aspects of training, in identifying risks and quantifying violence, but also a commitment to gender diversity in staff composition. Missions with insufficient female field staff may find it difficult to respond to the particular risks faced by women and girls in the host country.

Selection and field-officer profile

Experienced field workers almost unanimously agree that staff selection for international missions has been a serious problem. When the selection of personnel is decentralised, contributing countries send people to a mission but there is no centralised control over who ends up on a mission, or how they are selected. OSCE missions suffer from such a decentralised policy. One HRFOR field officer recounted '[one country] sent us 20 observers for three months. We fought, 'NO! Send us 5 for three years!' But that was not on their agenda.' Another problem is simply a lack of serious screening – personnel are chosen on the basis of a written application and sent off to the field without even an interview, much less any serious training to remove those who are not ready or capable.

A third problem is the lack of critical investigation into applicants' past experience. ('We hire people with 10 missions behind them, regardless of how they actu-

ally performed in those missions…') If there are screening criteria, they are seldom integrally linked to the actual needs and context of a particular operation – except for language skills, and even this criterion is not always met. And finally, once people are selected, most institutions deploying missions have no clear processes for evaluating field staff, and, if necessary, for removing a person whose performance may be damaging a mission.

There are positive exceptions: all field missions interviewed in Colombia felt that selection there was well handled. OHCHR staff pointed out that selection processes now include adequate input from the field. The ICRC has a rigorous selection procedure, followed by a month-long induction in Geneva before personnel are sent to the field. An alternative model is that of the Australian International Deployment Group, which selects civilian police based on nominations and recommendations from their superior officers in their departments.

Despite some weak selection procedures, there was a high level of consensus among all interview respondents about what the criteria *should* be for selecting field officers. Nearly all agree that professional qualifications can be useful, and availability for an adequate minimum stay is vital, but that more intangible personal characteristics, skills and experience are also important for successful fieldwork. These include:

● commitment to civilian protection
● flexibility, being adaptable to the local social and cultural context
● tolerance, respect and cultural sensitivity
● a high degree of common sense
● a sense of humility; and no sense of superiority, which causes problems of communication as well as errors in analysis
● comfort with the field-based lifestyle, and experience to demonstrate this
● strong analytical skills
● strong and diverse communication and diplomatic skills – especially good listening skills, an ability to talk effectively with all kinds of people, and being able to transmit concerns to military personnel firmly but without offending
● being able to work as part of a team – not rigid and not prone to creating conflict
● skills in conflict resolution
● language ability relevant to the context
● a proper grasp of the human-rights approach
● ability to cope with stress.

These traits, gleaned from over a hundred interviews with field staff, cannot all be picked out from a written application, or even from a short interview. Effective selection requires a subjective decision by evaluators with good judgement and field experience.

Some INGOs face this challenge by linking selection to an intensive training process. After a detailed application which includes analytical writing, reflection on past experience by applicants, and long interviews, applicants are immersed in a week or more of training. This training also serves as a final screening, where experienced trainers can tell if candidates lack important qualities for field work, and can recommend that the decision to send them to the field be revoked.

Mission practitioners or leaders from the field should participate in the selection of their own personnel, but unfortunately the geographic distance can limit the depth of contact required for a good judgement. The aforementioned training/screening process also provides a solution to this challenge, if the institution arranges for key people to come from the field to participate as both trainers and selection evaluators.

The mistakes of poorly screened field staff are costly, damaging a mission's reputation and credibility, and sometimes presenting a serious security risk. Rigorous control over the selection of personnel is a sign of institutional maturity and responsibility. Hand in hand with rigorous selection goes the need for legitimate staff appraisals in the field. This would allow a mission to improve the quality of its work, identify needs for additional training and correct errors of selection, as well as informing the mission's understanding of the necessary criteria for future selection.

Adequate and appropriate training for mission personnel

In addition to poor selection, lack of training is a major cause of poor-quality field-work. On average, the commitment to training in the missions studied has been extremely low. In many cases, no training was offered at all – or at least the field officers interviewed had no knowledge of it, and had received none themselves. Some missions have offered brief orientation sessions on the ground, often long after field officers have started their service.

Most existing training is criticised for its dry, lecture format or legal character, and its irrelevance to practical field problems. Training is often focused only on transmitting organisational mandates and rules, or political information about the situation; seldom is it focused on improving practical skills. In the worst of cases, the apparent 'crisis urgency' of a situation has been used to excuse the omission of training altogether, with the consequent risk that the most delicate missions are the least prepared.

There have, however, been some promising exceptions. Many MICIVIH field staff went through an intensive three-week orientation in Haiti, complete with practical exercises and role-plays on culture, politics and how and when to intervene with authorities, and some study of the local language. UNICEF and UNHCR have both developed general staff training programmes, which include protection components in workshops and seminars as well as on-line distance-learning

courses. The ICRC and NGOs including PBI and the Nonviolent Peace Force all demand substantial off-site training sessions before deployment.

Appropriate preparation for a delicate field operation should include a number of different components:

- off-site training before deployment, both general and mission-specific
- on-site training and orientation after arrival in the mission
- an ongoing mentor relationship with a more experienced field officer
- periodic training during service, including on specific practical topics
- regular appraisal processes and de-briefing at the conclusion of service.

Off-site training before a mission

Before final acceptance for service in the field, candidates should go through an intensive participatory training process. This should serve to familiarise them with the demands of fieldwork, while also giving an experienced training team the opportunities for final selection and screening of candidates before allowing them to serve in the field. Role-plays in particular, are a powerful training tool for assessing certain skills of communication, practical analysis and teamwork.

This initial training should be skill-focused and general, with an objective of preparing field officers for service in a variety of contexts. It should also promote a clear understanding of the institution sponsoring the field presence, and build morale and loyalty to it and its mandate. And it should have a formal assessment process, in which a team of trainers can make suggestions to individuals for additional preparation.

An institution that participates in multiple field missions should take advantage of this general training to involve candidates who are likely to serve in a variety of contexts. These joint experiences may cement organisational coherence and morale, such that field workers can think 'outside the box' of a single mission, show empathy and concern for other missions, be prepared for multiple mission service in their career, and fully grasp the mandate and principles of the sponsoring institution as distinct from operational objectives in a given context. Inter-governmental missions have been plagued by confusion among field workers about institutional mandates, and by morale problems stemming from this confusion. Likewise, expectations from service in one mission have been a source of conflict and confusion when a field worker moves on to another.

Mission-specific training can be a separate process aimed at preparing already trained field officers for a specific mission. Or, if new officers are being recruited urgently for a specific mission, it could be a second stage of the initial training process. This training helps field workers to apply general skills and strategies to the specific mission, and it can identify gaps in knowledge and preparation for a particular mission. Horror stories abound of field workers arriving in the field with no

knowledge of the real conditions, the culture or the politics of the situation they will face. The mission-specific training should prepare all field personnel for a smooth arrival and an efficient transition to initial fieldwork.

Each mission will face distinct needs and demands in terms of security, discretion, communication styles, mission mandate and cultural understanding, for example, and it would be a mistake to assume that either generic training or experience in another mission can adequately prepare people for arrival at a new one. Field officers, and even civil-society respondents, stressed in interviews the importance of field officers with prior experience receiving some clear training in a country's context before arrival, since they otherwise might have too strong a tendency to apply lessons and strategies from other contexts without appropriate adaptation. Finally, advance mission training should consciously develop a sense of *esprit de corps* for field personnel who will later be depending on each other on the ground.

Some suggest that mission-specific training is best done only in country. This has serious risks: field personnel would still be arriving ill informed. In some cases they will not be ready to deal with mission conditions, something they should be persuaded to consider before departure to the field. The field reality is often tumultuous and unpredictable, and institutional commitment to rigorous training upon arrival is easily lost in the pressures of immediate demands. Finally, the capacity to absorb a training process immediately upon arrival is constrained by the numerous stresses and uncertainties characteristic of arrival in a new culture and context.

On-site training after arrival

Ideally, arriving field workers will have a chance to settle in briefly, overcome some of the initial shock of arrival, meet their colleagues, learn something about work expectations and immerse themselves in the mission's operational language. For this arrival process, some kind of support or mentoring is essential. Then, within a short time, there should be a serious on-site training/orientation to complement the training received before arrival.

This training can continue as one-to-one mentoring, but there are significant advantages to arranging arrival schedules so that there are group orientations for new arrivals. Group training is efficient for the mission, since experienced field personnel will not face the same questions repeatedly. But it is also much better for the arriving field workers, who will share the experience and many of the same questions with others in their situation. This training is a chance for the mission to instil a clear and coherent sense of identity and mandate in each field officer, avoiding confusion and contradiction.

Mentoring, ongoing training, appraisal and debriefing

Training processes, no matter how thorough, are never enough. New people in the field do not always know where to turn with questions and doubts, and for help in

devising strategies for complex or threatening situations. ICRC delegates in particular stressed the value of having a learning relationship with a more experienced delegate. Not everyone is lucky enough to find this by themselves. Mentoring should be institutionalised, from the highest levels of mission leadership down to the individual field officer. A mission's training staff should establish communication links with experienced officers who serve as mentors, to learn from their experience, and constantly improve the training processes.

Depending on their length of service, there should be a process for continued training of personnel in the field, bringing together recent and more experienced staff members. Experienced field officers should be periodically invited back to participate in off-site pre-mission trainings, giving them a chance to reflect outside the field context while also serving as a resource for new candidates.

Larger missions should consider having an ongoing mobile training unit: experienced trainers who travel to the various mission sub-offices to carry out seminars in a flexible manner that can respond to developing needs in the field. This mechanism would also allow for inter-institutional seminars and training in particular local settings where a variety of organisations are confronting similar problems.

Periodic appraisal and debriefing of field officers at the end of their service is a responsibility of any institution, and yet it doesn't often happen. Ideally there should be some link between these processes and a mission's training unit. These evaluations can show whether field officers are getting adequate preparation, and can inform ongoing training.

Training methodologies

The primary methodologies of training for complex political work have to be experiential and practical. It must involve some serious problem-solving practice, in which staff are not listening to lectures, but participating in learning methodologies to help them come up with answers and strategies themselves, because this is what they will need to do in the field. This can involve role-plays, simulations, well-prepared exercises for team strategy-building, and serious debates among participants about complex and thorny quandaries they may face. The training process should elicit doubts and fears, and seek constructive means of addressing them. Knowledge of technical issues, or the passing on of information, though important, should be covered in separate seminars. Use of training time for the dissemination of information should be minimised.

Whether on-site or external, a training process should bring in outside resource people. If it is mission-specific training, it should involve local analysts and professionals, or representatives of beneficiary groups, and it should involve substantive dialogue. Some participation in training by mission leadership is important, especially as training can play such an important role in building a mission's sense of unity and morale. Also, sharing comparative experiences from other missions can be very useful.

Training should address specific skills that have been generally under-empha-sised. As noted above, for instance, training in gender-related aspects of protection is often a crucial gap to cover. Training should also include practice in all the analyt-ical, strategic and communication skills that have been detailed in earlier sections of this book, especially those skills that are not automatically part of the professional education that field workers receive before joining a mission.

Training policy

All of these suggestions depend on one primary policy decision: a serious institu-tional resource commitment to training. This includes:

- a budget covering personnel, travel and logistics
- dedicated and qualified training staff both outside and inside the mission
- a time commitment in the work plans of all field staff to spend the necessary time being trained and assisting in training
- minimum training thresholds, below which a field worker will not be deployed.

The most frequent justification for not making these commitments is lack of resources and time. This is flawed logic, since a proportional commitment to training is necessary at any resource level. Institutions that fail to invest sufficiently in training do not usually fix this problem as their budgets grow – other demands continue to take resource priority. International institutions will not implement better training when they have more money, but when they decide it matters enough to prioritise in their existing budgets.

Institutions sending protection workers into conflict zones should also consider multi-institutional collaborations on protection training. It would be a useful step for some inter-institutional conferences and consultations to begin a dialogue and share resources and wisdom in this field. Training institutions should be developing rigorous teaching modules for protection practitioners, and training a larger cadre of trainers for field missions.

Care for the morale and mental health of mission staff

Another striking gap in nearly all of the missions studied was the lack of institu-tional attention to the emotional needs of field workers. The statistics on post-trau-matic stress among people in this occupation would probably be shocking if anyone had paid enough attention to measure it. An institution has a legal and moral responsibility to care for those people on the ground taking the risks and absorbing the stress. And on a practical level, high levels of emotional burnout and stress are also major impediments to the quality and efficiency of a mission's performance.

> 'I was burnt out after three months in Kosovo... I did not think it would be so difficult to live through such a situation.'
>
> KVM field officer

Numerous factors make mission personnel in conflict zones especially vulnerable to mental- health problems. These include:

- direct security risks – fear for oneself, and the consequent stress of constant security caution
- indirect security risks – constant fear for the well-being of co-workers and local contacts
- direct trauma – living through violent experiences
- secondary trauma – living and working constantly close to victims of trauma
- stressful living conditions – unfamiliar terrain or climate, heat, risks of serious health problems, inadequate housing or facilities for comfort or personal space
- loneliness – distance from loved ones
- stress of collective work – the demands of working as a team, with members all under stress, which generally manifests in internal group dynamics
- cultural stress – unfamiliarity at first, or fatigue over the longer term from functioning within an unfamiliar culture
- institutional stress – frustration with the inefficiency or lack of resources of the mission itself and its inability to respond adequately to the pressing human demands of victims.

In over one hundred interviews with field staff, not a single person felt that there was adequate institutional treatment of mental-health needs. One reaction to this was the stoic approach – 'You just have to be tough, and cope with it yourself.' In fact, it appears that few field mission personnel were even warned before deployment that there was danger and stress involved in the work. Applicants to most of these institutions are not asked to reflect seriously on their commitment and readiness for such risks, or their ability to maintain a calm and objective demeanour under threatening circumstances.

> 'You know I saw lots of dead. Very bad dead. Did anybody take care of our brain? Do you think it is normal? It is not normal to see dead people. Nobody will talk about it. Is anybody prepared for that?'
>
> HRFOR field officer

But there is a growing recognition that a mission has a responsibility to minimise these health risks by encouraging skills for self-care, mutual support among team members, training for coping with stress, and by providing adequate services for people who have been traumatised or burnt out. A few organisations offer workshops on managing occupational stress to staff, or make post-incident or post-mission psychological support available. In only one case, PBI in Colombia, was there a staff-person in the field with the job of providing mental-health support to staff and volunteers.

There are important initiatives underway to develop constructive policies, training, therapies and supportive practices for field workers. Protection field missions must make a commitment to learn, and take advantage of what is being developed by other organisations. The point here is not to re-state best practice in mental-health support for field workers, which is better described elsewhere (see Key resources), but rather that protective field missions need first and foremost to make a policy and resource commitment to use the tools that exist.

Key resources on self-care and mental health for field mission workers

Ongoing resource development in this field can be found at these web-links: People in Aid (www.peopleinaid.org); Action without Borders (www.psychosocial.org) and Humanitarian Practice Network (www.odihpn .org).

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Learning from the past and building for the future

Missions and their sponsoring institutions should systematically collect and analyse experiences and learn from them. Most have failed to do so. There is little in place to ensure that one mission learns from the mistakes of past missions, even when the

missions are sponsored by the same institution. The transmission of institutional memory and lessons is largely left to individuals. Yet newcomers arriving in the field are often not even given sufficient overlap with their predecessors to learn from recent experiences.

There is a growing pool of experienced field personnel and leadership from past missions. They are each bringing their own lessons from one mission to the next. They also bring their memories of who serves well in different contexts, and these personal links can positively affect selection processes, yielding more qualified mission staff. But this is very ad hoc. Even when a mission has people with prior experience, this is no substitute for systematic lesson learning. Individual memories tend to over-emphasise mistakes and errors, and this tends to bias strategies towards avoiding scandal rather than maximising positive impact.

Some efforts outside sponsoring institutions have tried to improve this situation. The Aspen Institute convened a series of studies and consultations on many of the unarmed missions of the 1990s. In 2002, the Rockefeller Foundation convened a consultation in London of experts in unarmed monitoring, which included planners of upcoming missions. Experienced practitioners have also published numerous articles in journals to preserve important lessons from field experience.

Field missions rarely utilise internal procedures to record and learn from their experiences. They cite the pressing need to prepare for the next crisis, which seems always more urgent than sitting people down to analyse what has just happened, so that they may do better next time. Rapid staff turnover exacerbates this gap. Lesson learning doesn't happen unless it is structured into the work plan and management of a mission, for instance through regular staff retreats or meetings to share notes on mistakes and successes. This would not require anything so daunting as institutional reform – only a mission-level commitment to value lesson learning enough to invest resources and time, and to do it. Managers should implement structures to ensure sufficient overlap and the passing on of essential lessons during staff transitions, as well as bringing staff members together in organised processes to discuss experiences and preferred practical responses to shared challenges.

Summary and recommendations

Believe in unarmed protection

- Respect and understand the relative advantages and disadvantages of armed and unarmed intervention strategies.
- Respect the efforts of other institutions.

Get the right entry agreement – and stretch it

Aim to secure:

- unlimited access to territory, all key players, and information
- commitments by armed parties to support the unarmed presence, ensure its security, communicate regularly and co-operate on logistical aspects
- a clear legal framework
- freedom to choose technical-support tasks
- freedom of expression
- sufficient political support to allow the flexibility for other activities as necessary to improve protection.

Make the mission big enough

- Larger missions have increased political power, protection impact and independence of the manipulations of national actors.
- Too small a mission can convey political benefits to abusers while insufficiently holding them to account for their actions.
- Optimal mission size depends on a range of factors including the size of the territory, its population, the number of ongoing abuses, the scale and nature of combat, the precise role of the mission and the level of complementarity and collaboration with other presence on the ground.

Use the right mix of skills

- Include a range of professional capacities including human-rights monitoring, humanitarian assistance, civilian policing and military-observer skills, and diplomatic/political experience.
- Select personnel carefully and rigorously, using intensive face-to-face processes that allow for evaluation of the many crucial subjective qualities required for field service.
- Ensure that mission management has the strategic, leadership and political-diplomatic capacity to lead a protection mission effectively.

Provide adequate and appropriate training for mission staff

- Commit serious institutional resources to training.
- Expand training to cover the full spectrum of the field officer's mission experience.

- Use experiential and practical training, with interactive methodologies.
- Initiate internal and inter-institutional 'lessons-learned' projects, linked to training.

Care for morale and mental health

- Commit resources to staff care.
- Encourage mutual support among team members.
- Offer training and other adequate services to deal with stress and trauma.

Learn from the past and build for the future

- Provide opportunities to share and analyse strategies and techniques.
- Consciously cultivate a cadre of experience that can mentor new field officers.

12 | CONCLUSION
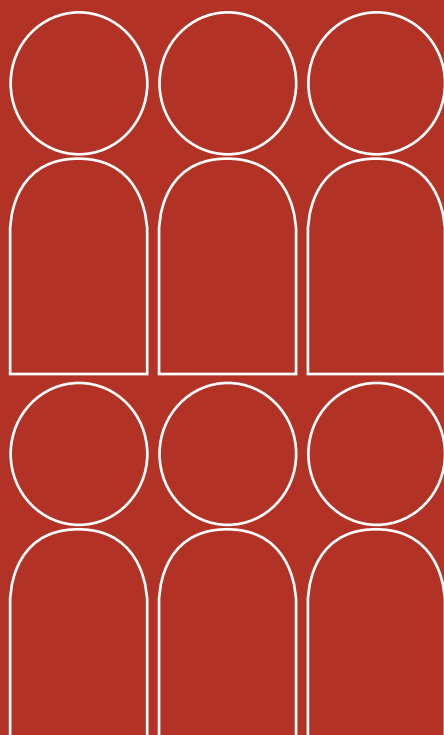
E ffective field presence can significantly contribute to and enhance the protection of civilians. The specific lessons and recommendations of this manual, are relevant to a wide range of deployments of international missions and agencies on the ground in conflict zones. The international community needs to take greater advantage of the protective power of field presence, and deploy more such missions.

Passive presence for its own sake is not needed; rather, the requirement is for well-informed and carefully analysed strategies and tactics that use the presence of each field officer to influence all the actors around them. The five strategies of sustained diplomacy, visibility, encouragement and empowerment, convening and bridging, and public advocacy are basic building blocks for any protection mission. Other strategies and activities will also emerge in particular situations.

These ideas will contribute to protection only when they are applied in real situations on the ground. For this reason, we hope that each organisation or mission will take our recommendations as a basis from which to develop appropriate and effective strategies for their specific situations, and take greater initiative for the protection of civilians. Ideally, they will build these suggestions into their own training and planning. This may mean using this manual as it is, but it could also mean integrating the lessons into other internal manuals and training materials. This process of integration will allow each organisation to tailor the approach to their individual institutional identity and reality.

Protection is a difficult challenge, and this manual by no means presumes to have all the answers. The tools of proactive presence must be used together with a wide range of other efforts to assist and protect victims of violence and war all over the world. It is our deepest hope that this manual will assist institutions and individuals, and that it will encourage greater deployment of protection missions and more active use of proactive protection tools by field officers worldwide.

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ANNEXE: METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH AND INTERVIEWS

The conclusions in this manual are based on data gathered from a variety of sources including documental and archival materials, in-depth telephone interviews and three field trips. Relevant data from the author's prior research and practical experience in Guatemala, Haiti and El Salvador was also integrated. Most interviews were tape-recorded, except in some cases during field trips where it was judged that recording would be a security concern or hindrance for respondents. Most interviews were individual, although a number of interviews held during the field trips were in group settings with civil-society organisations and local communities.

All interviews were transcribed, and the data in these transcriptions were coded and entered into a database. The coding process included 200 keywords, allowing for transversal comparison of multiple themes across several thousand data entries covering the different conflicts and mission institutions. These data were then analysed according to each theme, eliciting lessons learned as well as judgements widely shared among respondents about best practice in such missions.

Altogether, over 270 respondents participated in individual and group interviews: 70 in Colombia, over 60 in Sudan and over 80 in Sri Lanka, as well as 60 additional interviews with field officers, observers and experts familiar with past missions. Field visits were made to 14 cities and towns: Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Bucaramanga in Colombia; Khartoum, El Fasher, Nyala and Ed Daein in Sudan; Colombo, Kilinochchi, Jaffna, Trincomalee, Katancuddy and Batticaloa in Sri Lanka. In addition, several rural communities near these settlements were visited.

Interviews in the Field:

Field research included interviews with members of the following fours groups

1) *Government officials*: including over 20 representatives of state institutions, including several police superintendents and military commanders working in zones of conflict, several former military and civilian authorities, co-ordinators of humanitarian affairs, human-rights commission officers, public defenders, representatives of ombudsmen's offices and governors.

2) *Armed group representatives*: In Sri Lanka and Sudan, due to ongoing peace processes at the time of the research, it was possible also to meet with representatives of the guerrilla organisations, the LTTE and the SLA. In Colombia, however, it was not advisable to secure interviews directly with representatives of the

guerrilla or paramilitary groups.

3) *Civil society*: The field trips were also the primary vehicle for hearing the opinions of civil society and communities about the role of international presence in their own protection. Dozens of interviews were carried out with individuals, NGO leaders and community groups in both urban and rural settings. These included visits to seven IDP camps or displaced communities in Darfur including both ethnic African and Arab respondents, discussions with NGO consortia throughout Sri Lanka representing diverse ethnic communities, and meetings with dozens of NGO and community representatives individually in all three countries. Where information was available about presumed political or armed-group alignments of NGO or civil-society groups, interviews were secured across the political spectrum. In total these interviews included the distinct opinions or reflections of over 100 civil-society respondents.

4) *Representatives of international agencies and INGOS engaged in protection work*: including embassy personnel, donor consortiums, 30 field personnel from humanitarian agencies, 20 field officers from INGOs, and African Union peacekeepers and civilian police.

Every field visit of course included numerous interviews with the management and field officers of the focal mission. This included the head and deputy head of mission in OHCHR-Colombia as well as heads of all OHCHR-Colombia sub-offices and several additional human-rights field officers. In Sri Lanka, interviews were held with the SLMM Head of Mission and Chief of Staff, other headquarters personnel, the heads of three field offices and half a dozen additional monitors in Colombo, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, and Trincomalee. In Sudan, with a research focus on humanitarian presence, interviews were carried out in Khartoum with the Deputy Resident Co-ordinator, high-level managers from the WFP and UNHCR presence, the UNMIS Director of Protection, and over a dozen representatives of additional humanitarian agencies, including UNICEF, OCHA, and UNMIS Human Rights, in El Fasher, Nyala, Ed Daein and Khartoum.

In addition to the focal mission of each field study, research also examined the role of other key protection agencies with a presence in all three conflicts, in particular the ICRC, UNHCR and UNICEF. Interviews were carried out with 18 ICRC delegates in the three conflicts, and 13 field officers for UNICEF and UNHCR. Protection-focused INGOs like Peace Brigades International in Colombia and the Nonviolent Peaceforce in Sri Lanka were also included.

Additional interviews beyond the field trips were held with 24 former field officers from past missions, including two heads of missions. Respondents also included nine other headquarter-based ICRC staff, five OCHA protection staff, seven representatives of international NGOs, academic experts, and additional representatives of DPKO and DPA, as well as experts on the Australian international civilian police.

END NOTES

1   For example, UN Security Council Resolutions 1265 and 1296, and various resolutions of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

2   Slim and Bonwick, Protection. An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies; Mancini-Griffoli and Picot. *Humanitarian Negotiation: A handbook for securing access, assistance and protection for civilians* (see Bibliography for full details).

3   Some relevant references regarding the use of law are provided in Chapter 8 under the discussion of monitoring and reporting (and listed as 'Key resources on human-rights monitoring').

4   A broader conception of protection is widely used by the IASC and ICRC, delineating three spheres of protection action as follows. (i) Responsive action aims to stop, prevent or alleviate the worst effects of the abuses. Impact is preventive and immediate, but also aims to deter future abuses. (ii) Remedial action assists and supports people after violations while they live with subsequent effects. Impact is short-to-medium term. (iii) Environment-building action moves society as a whole toward protection norms that will prevent or limit future abuses. Impact is long-term and structural. The more limited approach of this manual, however, is to focus on the proactive and preventive levels of protection that limit perpetrators' capacity to damage.

5   This analysis is drawn in part from Mahony and Eguren, *Unarmed Bodyguards* (see Bibliography for full details).

6   A potential criticism of Figures 2.4 and 2.5 is their apparent assumption that actors are entirely rational. However, Figures 2.6 and 2.7 also take into account irrational decision making. Whether actors cannot calculate what will be in their best interests, or are applying different psychological yardsticks to their decision making, the result is the same: their actions will not be entirely predictable, and they will make mistakes.

7   Of all the conflicts and armed parties studied, only in the case of the Interhamwe in Rwanda were no data found on sensitivity to international presence. But this may well be a gap in the data, as none of those interviewed about the 1994-98 HRFOR period had any direct contact with the Interhamwe.

8   For additional data and analysis see the report of the East Timor Truth Commission, CAVR, available at: http://www.ictj.org/downloads/CAVR/12-Annexe1-East-Timor-1999-GeoffreyRobinson.pdf.

9   Author interview with Hector Gramajo, cited from Mahony and Eguren,

Unarmed Bodyguards (see Bibliography for full details).

10 For instance, interviews carried out with Formerly Abducted Children of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda revealed important dynamics and tactics of the LRA that could help to understand the protection vulnerabilities of civilians as well as the leadership structures of the organisation.

11 In a notable counter-example, SLMM personnel have firm management directives to 'get out of the office'. While they are faulted by some for lack of contact with civil society, they are constantly in touch with both armed parties

12 While expressing concern about military harassment of a large IDP camp in Darfur, advocates needed to understand that the combination of guerrilla infiltration in the camp with the camp's proximity to the region's major airport was extremely sensitive in military terms.

13 MICIVIH was apparently the only mission to provide rudimentary tutoring - three weeks of classes in Haitian Kreyol. And UNAMET was able to recruit some political officers who spoke Bahasa Indonesian.

14 See for example Mahony and Eguren, *Unarmed Bodyguards,* or Mahony, *Side by Side* (see Bibliography for full details).

15 See Pustyntsev, *Making Allies: Engaging government officials to advance human rights* (see Bibliography for full details).

16 An important caveat for all our results is that our field visit covered only North and South Darfur, as West Darfur was then declared off-limits for non-essential travel. Our interview respondents included many with experience in West Darfur.

17 Enhancing the profile of any threatened group or community must of course be done in collaboration with that group, taking into account any possible risks of reprisal that could be generated by an expanded profile.

18 For a spirited day-by-day account of the experience of one Australian Civilian Police Officer in UNAMET, describing many such showdowns with Indonesia militia, military and police, see Savage, *Dancing with the Devil: A personal account of policing the East Timor vote for independence* (see Bibliography for full details).

THE CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN DIALOGUE (HD CENTRE)

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The HD Centre is an independent, Geneva-based foundation whose purpose is to prevent human suffering in war. Our humanitarian approach starts from the premise that preventing and resolving armed conflict is the surest means of doing so, and to this end we promote and facilitate dialogue between belligerents.

We are neutral and impartial, supporting only those solutions that offer the best prospect for a just and lasting peace, in line with international law.

Through our work, we aim to contribute to efforts to improve the global response to armed conflict. We believe that dialogue based on humanitarian principles can assist in achieving political settlements, and that the informal initiatives of a private foundation can usefully complement formal diplomacy.

We pursue our objectives with a commitment to new approaches, to learning, and to collaboration, working with others across borders, beliefs and professions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Liam Mahony is a pioneer in the theory and practice of international protection. His experience includes protection work with Peace Brigades International (PBI) in Guatemala in the 1980s, developing training frameworks for PBI, and co-founding PBI's field presence in Haiti. He is the co-author of: *Unarmed Bodyguards: International accompaniment for the protection of human rights,* the first book analysing and explaining the tactic of protective accompaniment. Other work includes editing the *Kosovo Report* of the Independent International Commission on Kosovo (Oxford University Press, 2000). Liam has been Lecturer in Public and International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, and was the series editor of 40 monographs on innovations in the human-rights movement – the *Tactical Notebook* series of the New Tactics in Human Rights Project. His recent consulting projects include commissions for the Rockefeller Foundation, the World Council of Churches, Amnesty International, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the World Food Programme.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CODHES	*Consultoria para los Perechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento* (Council on Human Rights and Displacement), Colombia
DPA	Department of Political Affairs (UN)
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN)
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia)
HRFOR	Human Rights Mission for Rwanda (UN)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHL	international humanitarian law
INGO	international NGO
KVM	Kosovo Verification Mission (UN)
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MICIVIH	International Civilian Mission in Haiti (UN/OAS)
MINUGUA	UN Mission to Guatemala
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NGO	non-government organisation
OAS	Organization of American States
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN)
ONUSAL	UN Mission to El Salvador
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SLM/A	Sudan Liberation Movement/Army
SLMM	Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (UN)
PBI	Peace Brigades International
TNI	the Indonesian military
UN	United Nations
UNAMET	UN Assistance Mission to East Timor
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNMIS	UN Mission to Sudan
UNSC	UN Security Council
WFP	World Food Programme (UN)