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MODULE 1
INTRODUCTION TO
UNARMED CIVILIAN
PROTECTION

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OVERVIEW AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The Special Committee underlines the relevance of unarmed strategies to protect civilians in peacekeeping operations as political instruments that can effectively protect civilians by helping to bring an end to violent conflicts, shoring up the confidence of parties in peaceful solutions and working to advance peace processes. In this regard, and taking into account the positive contributions of unarmed civilian protection, the Special Committee stresses that peacekeeping missions should make every effort to leverage the non-violent practices and capabilities of local communities to support the creation of a protective environment.

Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations 2018 substantive session, p. 65, 12 February–9 March 2018, New York

More people are displaced today because of war, violence, persecution and other emergencies than any other time since the UN High Commissioner on Refugees started keeping track. An increasing number of people are at risk because of violent conflicts. In its 2020 report, UN High Commission on Refugees cited 79.5 million displaced people, with 10 million fleeing their homes in the past year, the highest global displacement on record. This number is compounded by climate refugees as an increasing number of people flee conflicts related to climate disruption. The closing of borders as a response to the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic has made it more difficult for people to flee their countries and seek asylum.

While civilians have always been affected by wars and violent conflicts, the extent and complexity of civilian protection needs has received more attention in recent decades. Rape and other attacks on civilians are more clearly acknowledged and better understood as ‘weapons of war’, not just side effects. As a consequence, protection responses have increased and diversified. Multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations¹ have included

¹ These combine military, civil administration (including election and human rights monitoring and police support) and humanitarian expertise, together with political negotiations, and mediation.

the protection of civilians in their mandates, while many humanitarian organizations have built it into their assistance programmes. However, there are many situations of war and violent conflict, where peace operations are not deployed or are not sufficient and where government actors are not willing or able to provide protection to all civilians. And though humanitarian organizations may be operating in these areas, they rarely provide direct physical protection to threatened civilians; that is generally considered the role of the police or military.²

Traditional approaches for the protection of civilians are not keeping pace with the need. Despite significantly increased needs, the 2021 UN peacekeeping budget remains the same as the previous year's. In fact, if all approaches for the protection of civilians were added together—armed, unarmed, governmental, NGOs—the total capacity would not come close to meeting the needs. Effective and affordable methods must be identified and scaled up.

Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) has been developed in response to these concerns. Specially-trained and organized civilians apply UCP in situations of violent conflict, imminent violence, and post-crisis situations. Instead of arms they use a mix of nonviolent strategies to prevent violence, protect threatened civilians, and enhance the capacities of local peace mechanisms to respond at multiple levels to situations of violent conflict. While implementing organizations use different methods, depending on the organizational approach and context, the concept and practice of UCP is demonstrably effective (Beckman, 2013; Cure Violence, n.d.; Gunduz and Torralba, 2014; Mahony et al., 1997; PBI, 2009; Schweitzer, 2012; Furnari 2016, Julian 2020;). It might, however, be the least understood and least recognized among the different roles, strategies, and capacities civil society organizations can bring to peace processes. Still, it reflects a profound shift that is taking place in the global discourse on international response to conflict: from a concern for solely national security to national and human security, from the defence of states to the protection of civilians, and from the implementation of violent defence to the reduction of violence (Schweizer et al. 2010, p.17). In short, civilians protecting civilians!

Module 1 starts with an introduction to UCP, followed by definitions of some key terms. It then presents a diagram that defines and explains the spectrum of UCP approaches and provides an overview of two traditions in which UCP is rooted, namely nonviolence and conventional peacekeeping. It concludes with a presentation of the main actors of UCP.



Summary of Key Messages

- The nature of war has changed dramatically over the past century. The protection needs of civilians have increased and diversified. UCP offers a civilian-to-civilian protection approach that embraces the principle of the primacy of local actors and

² Humanitarian actors are increasingly called to do more to help people to stay safe. In 2013 the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) made a formal commitment to placing protection at the centre of humanitarian action. For more information, see section 1.4.4.

nonviolence.

- UCP is to be seen as complementary to conventional peacekeeping, the work of the ICRC, and other organizations whose work includes efforts to protect civilians in some degree. UCP practitioners operate in a variety of conflict situations offering civilian-to-civilian protection, including situations where no armed peacekeepers are deployed.
- Instead of using the threat of force, UCP practitioners employ a mix of key nonviolent methods, principles, values, and skills. Specially trained and organized civilians apply UCP in order to prevent violence and provide direct physical protection of civilians under threat.
- Key UCP methods are proactive engagement, monitoring, relationship building, and capacity enhancement. Key principles of UCP are nonviolence, non-partisanship, independence, primacy of local actors, civilian-to-civilian relationships, and civilian immunity in violent conflict.
- Though UCP has roots in the tradition of nonviolent action as well as the tradition of peacekeeping, it is not the sum of both traditions but rather a fusion of different components from each, leaving behind nonviolent resistance and armed protection. From this fusion, UCP has emerged into something new and distinct.
- While UCP work is traditionally associated more with the concept of peacekeeping, UCP agencies have increasingly incorporated peacebuilding skills and models into their work, especially those that emphasize encouragement as a primary tactic to protect civilians. Building bridges between communities and armed actors, mediating between factions, facilitating dialogue, or cultivating relationships of trust in hostile environments are typical peacebuilding strategies used by many UCP actors.
- The main actors of UCP are (1) UCP personnel, (2) the populations served (e.g. displaced people, women, children, human rights defenders), (3) the civilians and organizations that invite a UCP presence, and (3) local partners.
- UCP is an additional approach to peacekeeping. It is not a perfect instrument. It is not a panacea. But it is a tool that in some circumstances is the right one, the appropriate one, *the* most effective one. It is a tool that can sometimes be productively deployed on its own, and sometimes alongside other instruments such as a conventional peacekeeping operation.

1.1

Introduction to UCP

1.1.1

Understanding the need for the protection of civilians and reducing violence

UCP seeks to reduce violence and provide direct physical protection in situations of imminent and active violence, and in post-crisis situations. Understanding this need is a prerequisite for understanding the purpose of UCP. Warfare is one of humankind's most destructive activities. In the 19th century, it was widely accepted in the Global North that the military of a so-called 'civilized country' fought the armed forces of the enemy—*not* enemy civilians. killed compared to one civilian. Civilian immunity was a central principle in the military practice of major European powers and was embedded in international conventions (Primoratz, 2010, pp 1-2), though it was not extended to civilians in the Global South who were often seen as less than human, or certainly less valuable than Global North civilians.

However, the nature of violent conflict has changed dramatically during the past century. Modern weapons, especially small arms, have been one key factor in a radical increase in civilian deaths during wars and violent conflicts. Also, the shift from inter-state to intra-state wars during the late 20th century has brought violence directly into communities. In contemporary violent conflicts, the outdoor café, the inter-village bus, and the weekend marketplace have become battlegrounds (Anderson, 1999, pp 11-12). While the casualty rate of civilians, in comparison to that of combatants, has increased significantly since the beginning of the 20th century (Rupesinghe, 1998), there was a downward trend in the number of state-based armed conflicts after the end of the Cold War, continuing until 2012. Since 2015 casualty rates have remained at peak levels.³ In many internal conflicts involving government armed forces and rebel groups, civilians are trapped between the two factions, and are sometimes specifically targeted or used as human shields. Many more die from indirect violence. Even humanitarian aid workers, delivering assistance to survivors of war, are not free from attacks, whether intentional or unintentional. 2019 witnessed the highest number of attacks against aid workers in a decade.⁴

3 <https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/charts/>

4 <https://aidworkersecurity.org/incidents/report/summary>

Though violent conflicts affect entire civilian populations, it is the women, children, disabled, stateless, and displaced people who tend to be most vulnerable.⁵ Discrimination and violence also takes place against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity, though their numbers are much smaller. Access to basic services for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) is often difficult and IDPs are easy targets for exploitation and abuse. Women, children and in many cases men face heightened risk in the form of rape, sexual humiliation, and other types of violence. Many children are separated from their families during emergencies. Sometimes they are deliberately abducted and forced into roles of combatants, spies, messengers, or sex slaves. Both during and after conflicts, women and children are particularly exposed to the dangers of landmines and unexploded ordnance.⁶

People living in violence-affected countries struggle to address the root causes of conflicts, promote reconciliation and reach development goals. The 2015 adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in motion a global commitment for fifteen years of collective action to tackle the world's most pressing problems. In particular, the adoption of SDG 16 (to 'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels') recognizes the crucial links between conflict, poverty, peace, and prosperity. SDG 16's targets include to 'Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere' and '[to build] capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence...'

However, "[e]xtreme poverty is increasingly concentrated in places characterized by fragility and violent conflict: by 2030, 85 percent of the extreme poor—some 342 million people—will live in fragile and conflict-affected states.⁷ As the links between poverty, insecurity, and violence are substantiated, it becomes clearer that protecting civilians in vulnerable environments is an essential ingredient of building and sustaining peace. The protection needs of civilians are diverse and not only related to armed conflict. They may also arise in the following situations:

- Post-conflict situations, in which the lack of effective rule of law fosters violations and abuses;
- Natural disasters, in which natural hazards combined with poverty and social vulnerability put people at extreme risk;
- Famine, where drought, discrimination, political mismanagement and/or deliberate starvation cause severe risks;
- Epidemics and pandemics, where lack of access to preventive measures and adequate health care put people at extreme risk,
- Protracted social conflicts, in which discrimination, violence, exploitation, and impoverishment are constant risks (Slim & Bonwick, 2005).

5 Though categorizing vulnerable populations allows for a more focused response in providing protection, the categories should not be treated as absolute. There often are significant differences in the levels of vulnerability within each category.

6 <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/demining/>

7 Overseas Development Institute, *SDG Progress: fragility, crisis, and leaving no one behind*, 2018. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12427.pdf>

While all the protection needs of civilians in all these situations deserve to be met and are increasingly explored by UCP actors,⁸ the main focus of this course is on the practice of UCP to offer direct physical protection to threatened civilians in situations of violent political conflict.⁹



Recommended Resources for Further Study (Read)

- Ferris, E. (2011). *The Politics of Protection: The Limits of Humanitarian Action*, Chapter 10. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Furnari, E. (2016) *Wielding Nonviolence in the Midst of Violence: Case Studies of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping*. Institute for Peace Work and Nonviolent Conflict Transformation.
- InterAction, (2020) *Embracing the Protection Outcome Mindset: We All have a Role to Play*, p.2, InterAction Washington D.C. <https://protection.interaction.org/embracing-the-protection-outcome-mindset-we-all-have-a-role-to-play/>

1.1.2 Key characteristics of UCP

WHAT IS UCP?

UCP is the practice of unarmed civilians providing direct physical protection to other civilians before, during, and after violent conflict, to prevent or reduce violence, and strengthen or build local peace infrastructures. The purpose of UCP is to create a safer environment, or a 'safer space', for civilians to address their own needs, solve their own conflicts, and protect individuals and populations at risk of harm or death in their midst. This 'safer space' is created through a strategic mix of key nonviolent engagement

⁸ Cure Violence for example has effectively applied UCP in urban settings within the USA. UCP actors have also provided protection to refugees at borders, where they are being harassed by national security forces or local gangs. In 2020, with the Covid-19 pandemic raging, some UCP teams are focused on training methods to prevent the spread of the virus.

⁹ The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research defines a political conflict as a positional difference regarding values relevant to a society – the conflict items – between at least two decisive and directly involved actors, which is being carried out using observable and interrelated conflict measures that lie outside established regulatory procedures and threaten core state functions or the international order, or that hold out the prospect of doing so (2014). It includes conflict over territory, secession, decolonization, autonomy, system/ ideology, national power, regional predominance, international power and resources.

methods, principles, values, and skills. Organizations implement UCP differently; they may not use all of the methods listed in Figure 1 below and might include other methods not listed. Additionally, scholars and practitioners have used different terms to describe the theory and practice of UCP, including Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping, Proactive Presence, Protective Accompaniment and Violence Interruption. For the purpose of this course, the term Unarmed Civilian Protection will be used. Though there may be subtle differences between the theories that lie behind these terms, the respective practices are basically very similar.

The five main methods of UCP presented in this manual are proactive engagement, monitoring, relationship building, capacity enhancement, and advocacy. Each of these methods has a number of applications:

- **Proactive engagement:** protective presence, protective accompaniment, and interpositioning;
- **Monitoring:** ceasefire monitoring, rumour control, and early warning/early response;
- **Relationship building:** confidence building and multi-track dialogue;
- **Capacity enhancement:** enhancing self-protection capacity and strengthening local protection infrastructures;
- **Advocacy:** Educating and organizing.

Frequently, UCP methods and applications are used in a dynamic interaction, reinforcing and complementing each other. They are also selected on a case-by-case basis, depending on the specific needs of the identified population, the type of conflict and context, as well as the mandate and capacity of the implementing organization. As such, UCP may emphasize various methods and applications differently in different situations, as well as in different phases of a particular conflict. UCP is more dynamic process than prescription.

It is the application of these methods—supported by key principles (e.g. nonviolence, nonpartisanship) as well as key sources of guidance (e.g. International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights Law) and key skills (e.g. facilitating, analysing)—that characterizes UCP (figure 1). Unarmed Civilian Protection practitioners are always unarmed and operating generally as a nonpartisan ‘third-party presence’. UCP methodology has been pioneered by organizations such as Peace Brigades International, Witness for Peace, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Meta Peace Team, and Nonviolent Peaceforce.

PBI makes us brave, which is very important for our job. Sometimes we have to go to dangerous places, and the existence of PBI makes us more secure in this sort of travel. PBI really helps us to make a space so we can travel and do our job in defending people without fear.

Afridal, Director of LBH Banda Aceh, a legal aid institute, about protective accompaniment provided by Peace Brigades International (PBI)

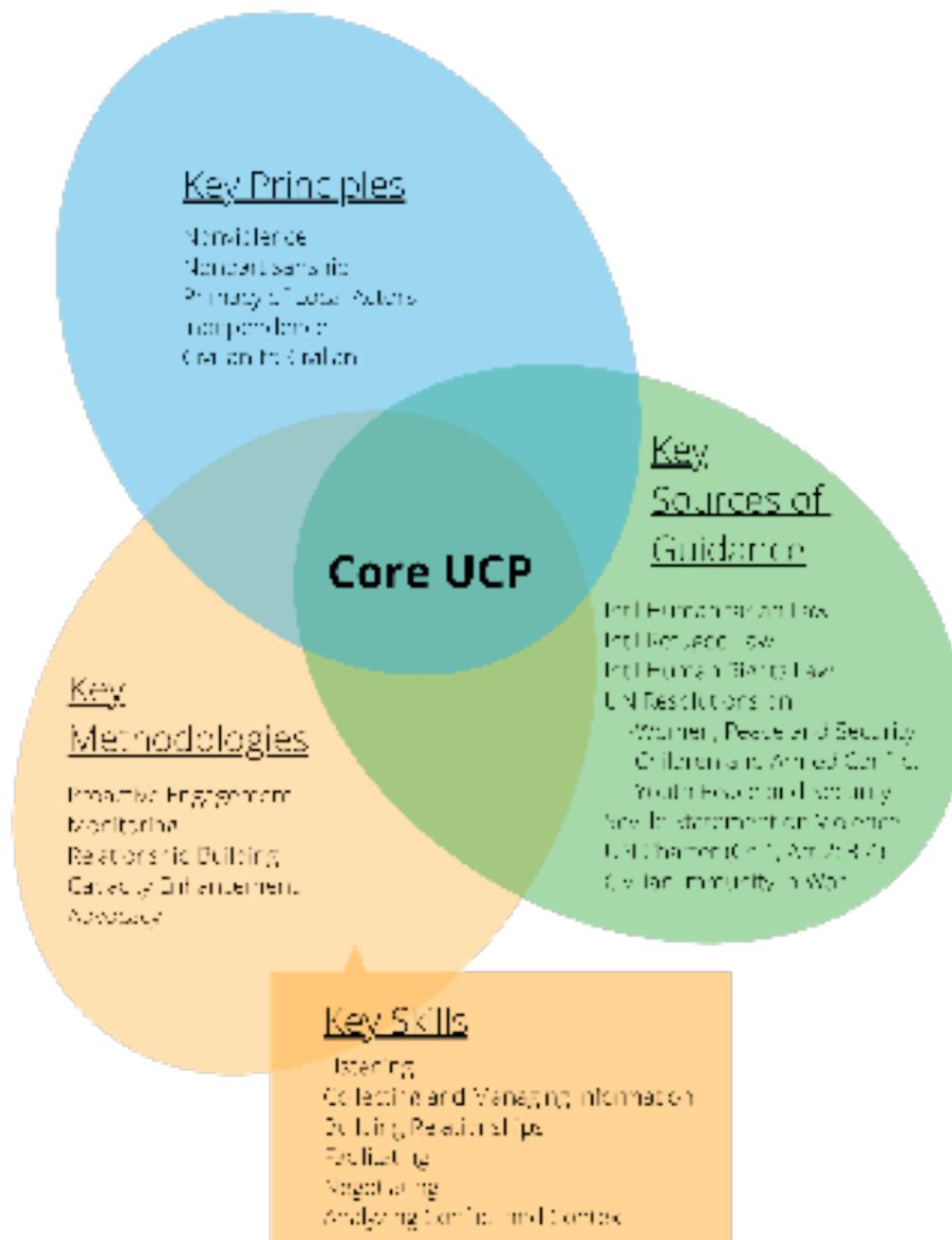


Figure 1: UCP is a strategic mix of key nonviolent engagement methods, principles, values, and skills. It is presented as a Venn diagram because UCP brings together these elements in various ways by different organizations. These organizations may use some, not necessarily all, of the methods and principles that are presented here. They may also use different terms to describe these methods and principles.

The different applications of UCP methods combine selective elements of UN peace operations and humanitarian efforts. They can be characterized as responsive, remedial,

or environment-building actions (see figure 2) (Caverzasio, 2001).

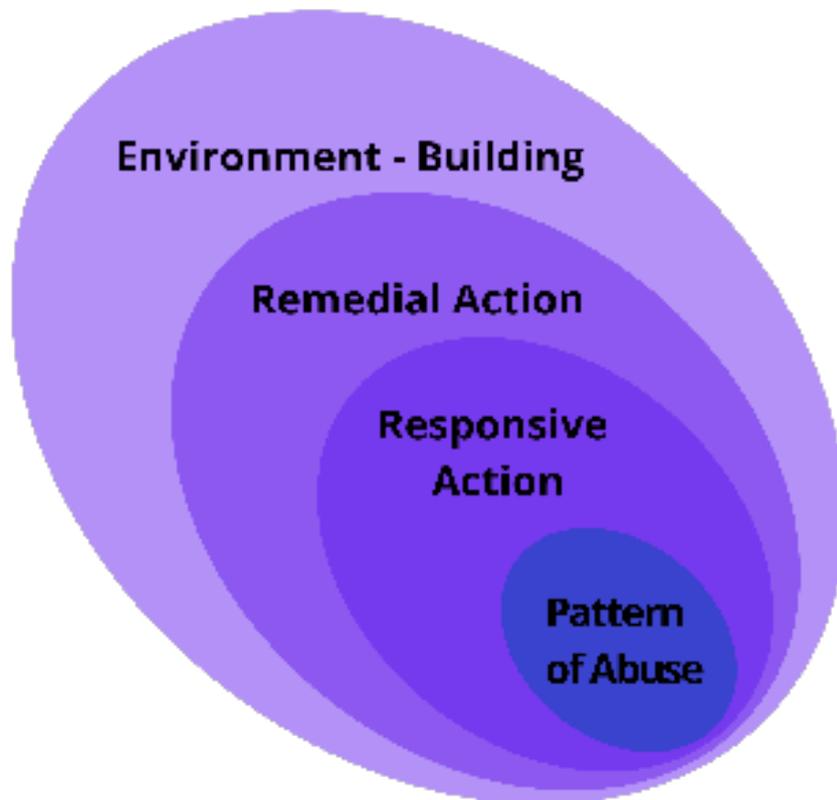


Figure 2: The different applications of UCP methods can be characterized as responsive, remedial, and environment-building actions (Source: Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2002) *Growing the Sheltering Tree: Protecting Rights through Humanitarian Action, Programmes and Practices Gathered from the Field*, page 115.)

Responsive action is undertaken in connection with an emerging or established pattern of violence. It is aimed at preventing the recurrence of violence against civilians, putting a stop to it, and/or alleviating its immediate effects.¹⁰ For many UCP organizations, this is the core focus. Examples within the context of UCP include:

- Providing visible protective presence and accompaniment for vulnerable civilians. UCP practitioners may, for example, accompany threatened human rights defenders when they travel to document abuses or violations. They may also be visibly present in the homes and workplaces of threatened civilians or monitor public gatherings to prevent the excessive use of force; Establishing safe spaces, weapon-free zones, and peace zones or temporarily relocating civilians under severe threat to ‘safe houses’

¹⁰ Direct physical protection is a form of responsive action, though not all responsive action is direct physical protection. As most humanitarians do not apply direct physical protection this distinction is not made in the egg model. Humanitarian actors, such as UNHCR, sometimes refer to direct physical protection and other forms of protection that are not included in the humanitarian framework as ‘general protection.’

until the threat is diffused;

- Bringing together conflicting parties in safe and neutral spaces and/or enhancing the capacities of mediators to mediate disputes by accompanying the process with presence and engagement;
- Providing rumour control and the monitoring of ceasefires to de-escalate tensions and enhance advancement of peace processes to final peace agreements;
- Engaging with aggressing parties and facilitating their commitment to uphold international or local norms, not to attack civilians, women, children, the disabled, hospitals, health centres, schools, religious places, and/or foreigners.

Remedial action is aimed at supporting people in restoring their dignity and ensuring adequate living conditions subsequent to a pattern of violence. It usually involves access to rehabilitation, restitution, compensation, and repair. Remedial activities are longer-term and aim to assist people living with the effects of a particular pattern of abuse. Examples of remedial action in the context of UCP include:

- Facilitating access to justice and other services for survivors of violence (accompaniment of survivors to hospitals or to state duty bearers to report abuse);
- Facilitating access to international actors such as UN Special Rapporteurs;
- Disseminating information and referring survivors of violence to service providers to ensure appropriate and timely assistance;
- Tracing and reunifying separated, unaccompanied, and abducted children with their families or primary caretakers.¹¹

Environment-building action refers to a more structural process aimed at creating and/or consolidating an environment conducive to full respect for the rights of individuals and groups. Examples in the context of UCP include:

- Establishing community security meetings or working groups with communities to raise awareness, share information about security or create protection strategies;
- Strengthening or establishing women or youth protection teams and building their capacity;
- Strengthening or supporting the functioning of community-based ceasefire monitoring mechanisms and early warning early response systems;
- Supporting state duty bearers and advocating for additional protection mechanisms (police posts, courts etc.) where necessary;¹²
- Establishing interactive dialogue frameworks in partnership with local actors to connect grassroots peacebuilding structures to higher-level peace process.

By and large, these actions are part and parcel of UN peace operations, where they are employed. But as the UN has acknowledged, UN peacekeeping missions (now called

11 Humanitarian actors may see this and other examples as ‘responsive action’, as they may take the violence of separation as their reference point rather than the incident of violence that led to the separation. Remedial actions would then be, for example, healing the trauma of separation or resolving problems in the reintegration process.

12 By ratifying a UN human rights treaty or convention, the state (as principal duty bearer) automatically assumes the role of guaranteeing these rights (of the right holders), namely the obligations to respect, protect and fulfil people’s rights. Non-state duty bearers (aka moral duty bearers) include parents, teachers, principals, administrators, NGOs etc.

peace operations) and the UN's Peacebuilding interventions are not always deployed sufficiently or at all in some conflict-affected areas where civilians face serious risks.

HOW DOES UCP WORK?

Armed actors on both sides confirm that the presence of a third party 'watching over them', including NP [Nonviolent Peaceforce], has served to temper their behaviour.

Gunduz & Torralba, 2014, p. 12

Frequently people ask, how would unarmed civilians be able to reduce violence and protect civilians? Rather than relying on the threat of armed force, UCP practitioners use physical presence and visibility, networks of relations, community acceptance, and positive engagement to achieve their objectives. While they do not resort to threats, UCP practitioners may bring attention to the costs or negative consequences of abusive behaviour. Modelling nonviolence in a high-intensity conflict creates opportunities for local actors to see alternative ways of responding to conflict or to reinvigorate traditional nonviolent conflict resolution practices.¹³ Social norms guide much of behaviour, and many people prefer to cooperate as long as others are doing their share (World Development Report 2015).

UCP is much more proactive than mere presence and observation. The effectiveness of UCP methods comes primarily from coordinating and communicating, engaging with key, armed and unarmed actors, and building multi-layered relationships. Effective coordination and communication with relevant actors and stakeholders at various levels of society open up channels of communication. It also enhances the capacities of local peace infrastructures to respond to incidents of violence and ensure the protection of civilians. Moreover, it increases the acceptance of UCP personnel by all actors and directly improves the security levels of UCP teams in the field.

In situations of violent conflict all parties have multiple sensitivities, vulnerabilities, and points of leverage, and international 'proactive presence' tacitly activates those sensitivities (Mahony, 2006). A conflict party usually wants to appear more legitimate than its opponents. Moreover, most conflict parties have several good reasons to pay attention to third parties: first, because their personal or political reputation is at stake; second, because they want to avoid repercussions including blame, retribution, or sanctions; and finally, because of individual moral concerns (Carriere, 2011) or personal and familial shame. Therefore, "unarmed" does not mean "without influence" or "defenceless".

Negative consequences to potential perpetrators include damage to international status, implied threat of referral to the International Criminal Court, and loss of international aid, political support, tourism, etc. In most contexts of violent conflict, human rights abuses and violations rarely happen when external actors (for example, foreign nationals)

13 Scientific research on mirror neurons demonstrates that modelling has more than a moral influence; it has a physiological effect on the brain. (Nagler) Please see some examples of this in the case studies that follow.

are present to witness the crimes.¹⁴ Outsiders play a vital role in providing impartial protection or expressing solidarity. In a subtle but important way a third party changes the dynamic of any conflict on a psychological level. Such witnesses greatly increase the likelihood that potential perpetrators will face negative consequences for their actions.

While outsiders have often played a vital protection role in conflict situations, local actors should not be overlooked as effective actors in promoting their own security. For example, when Colombian villagers stood together as a community against abuses by FARC armed actors, it seems that this “civilian pushback activated particular concerns and provided ‘normative cover’ that empowered more dovish commanders over their hard-line or abusive counterparts”, and this “brought about a reset in their default positions about the use of violence”. Furthermore, “evidence indicates that, as in Colombia, local civilian communities and activists in Syria had more success interacting with rebel fronts than well-known global humanitarian organizations that were operating more intermittently and at higher levels of interaction” (Kaplan 2013). Krause documents a case in Nigeria where older women and religious leaders prevented young men from entering their community during inter-communal conflicts. International UCP agencies typically aim to support such communities and to connect their efforts to higher levels of interaction as well as to communities on the other side of conflict fault lines.

Though pressure or discouragement may be needed in certain circumstances, the ‘soft power’ of encouragement is UCP’s preferred strategy.¹⁵ UCP practitioners will try to encourage potential perpetrators to achieve their goals without the use of violence. This is a practice that is rooted in a long tradition of active Nonviolence. Though UCP teams may not be successful in persuading conflict parties to refrain from battle altogether, combatants may be willing to reduce their impact on civilians. They may, for example, be persuaded not to attack schools and hospitals or to agree on a temporary ceasefire that allows for the evacuation of sick and elderly civilians. Such concessions are often the result of a long process of developing relationships and trust with all parties. These accommodations have been negotiated by local people doing UCP-type work as well as by internationals. The nonviolent approach to protection and keeping peace also supports the transition from a culture of violence to a culture of peace and nonviolence. It shows affected communities that it is possible, more often than is expected, to reduce violence without the use of weapons or reliance on armed force. Moreover, it enables these communities to participate actively in the process of peace and security and to shape their own destiny.

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

14 There are exceptions; in some locations in Iraq or Afghanistan, for example, the presence of foreigners has increased the security risk of local actors. It is crucial to perform a thorough analysis of local context in order to determine whether international presence is likely to have the desired affect or not.

15 When pressure is applied, most often it is applied indirectly through other parties, such as embassies or human rights advocacy organizations that may not have a field presence in the country, at least at senior management level.

you as an enemy, and who may be useful to solve future cases.

ICRC protection officer (Mahony, 2006, p.50)

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR STRENGTHS OF UCP?

UCP contributes a number of strengths to the challenging task of reducing violence and protecting civilians. These strengths include:

- the *applicability* of UCP to a wide array of contexts;
- the *flexibility* of UCP due to its bottom-up approach;
- the *accessibility* of UCP personnel to civilians;
- the *level of access* UCP teams get to armed actors and physical locations;
- the *level of trust* they gain and generate;
- the use of *nonpartisan advocacy* for civilian protection;
- the *unarmed status* of UCP practitioners, which reduces risk of harm to civilians and promotes the perception locally and internationally that they are agents of peace;
- the promotion of *sustainable self-protection* and *peacebuilding* in the communities in which UCP is deployed; and
- the *modelling of nonviolent behaviour* in a high intensity conflict



Recommended Resources for Further Study (View)

- Lazaro, F. (2012.) *On Mindanao, Protecting Civilians in a Combat Zone with Eyes and Notepad*, PBS Newshour, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/world/july-dec12/mindanao_12-25.html
- Unarmed Civilian Protection, <https://tinyurl.com/Overview-UCP>¹⁶
- Deterring violence in emergencies, Jonglei, South Sudan¹⁷
- <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B6xXWYhAU8biM1VnNjJxc0lZU0k/edit>

Recommended Resources for Further Study (Read)

- Wallis, T. (2010). Civilian Peacekeeping. *Oxford Encyclopedia of Peace* <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/civilian-peacekeeping-entry-oxford-encyclopedia-peace-oup-2009>
- Shah, K. (2013). *Diary of a Peacekeeper*. Page 5 of this document: <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/news/newsletters/2013/fn2013winter.pdf>
- Schweitzer, C. (ed.) (2010). *Civilian Peacekeeping: A Barely Tapped Resource*. Belm-Vehrte, Germany: Sozio Publishing. http://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/news/CP_A_Barely_Tapped_Resource.pdf

¹⁶ This video, sponsored by the Permanent Missions to the UN of Australia and Belgium introduced UCP at and event at the UN in May 2018.

¹⁷ This video presentation provides background information on the case study presented in box 2

1.2

Definition of terms

UNARMED

Unarmed means not equipped with or carrying weapons (Oxford, n.d.). In the context of UCP this means that organizations or agencies implementing UCP will not be equipped with or use weapons to protect themselves or their beneficiaries. It sends a clear message to all parties that they are not taking part in the conflict and pose no physical threat to anyone. UCP personnel are less of a target than those who carry weapons, and they may gain access to areas where armed peacekeepers are not welcome.

Whereas the reliance on armed force, including force protection by a third party, is avoided by all organizations and agencies that implement UCP, their approach towards local actors who carry or use weapons varies. These variations depend on the local context, the nature of the conflict, and the mandate of the organization. Many UCP agencies will not provide protection services to individuals and groups that are equipped with weapons. In some cases UCP agencies do not provide any services at all to armed actors, including capacity development for security forces. In other cases UCP groups will provide training to armed groups on human rights and humanitarian issues like the Grave Violations of Children's Rights. However, grey areas remain, especially for rural areas. Here, the distinction between an armed and unarmed actor can be hard to make. Traditional weapons (e.g. machetes, spears) play a prominent role in daily life (for cutting grass, fishing, etc.). Moreover, people may appear unarmed but could secretly be part of an armed militia group, for example.

CIVILIAN

The International Committee of the Red Cross defines civilians as those persons who are not combatants (members of military/paramilitary forces) or members of organized armed groups as parties to a conflict. The ICRC also excludes those who participate in a mass uprising (ICRC). A combatant, on the other hand, is defined as a person who takes an active part in hostilities, who can kill, and who, in turn, is regarded as a lawful military target. He or she can be a member of the armed forces (other than medical personnel and religious ministers), or of an armed organized group. Under international humanitarian law, armed forces are subject to an internal disciplinary system, which must enforce compliance with the rules of international law applicable to armed conflict.

The definition of "civilian" is important because UCP is carried out *by* civilians *for* civilians. At its core and on the outset, it is a partnership between UCP teams and local civil society, or organized by civil society within its own communities (though other partnerships may develop with local government, security sector, and humanitarian organizations over time). This partnership includes the invitation from local civil society organizations (mostly from NGOs) for UCP organizations to establish a physical

presence in their country and in specific communities within that country. The civilian-to-civilian partnership derives from global solidarity among civilians, some of whom have experienced similar violence elsewhere. Moreover, it de-emphasizes the role of armed conflict parties as the *sole* actors involved in providing protection and managing security. Finally, it encourages civil society leaders and organizations to increase their role as peacemakers, peacekeepers, and peacebuilders.

Though the definition of a civilian may appear to be clear, it sometimes creates confusion for UCP implementers at the field level. In areas of protracted conflict, a disproportionately large segment of society has been or still is affiliated in one way or another with armed forces. They may not be bearing arms, but may be aiding armed forces or groups. For example, members of local civil society organizations may be employed by the armed forces because NGO work does not allow them to make an adequate living; or a church minister in one small village may be employed in a neighbouring village as a police inspector. (For more information on civilian immunity, see module 2). Moreover, those aiding armed groups may do so freely and voluntarily, but they may also do so in response to pressure and threats from the armed group.

PROTECTION

Protection is defined by the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) as a concept that encompasses all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of human rights, refugee, and international humanitarian law.¹⁸ Protection involves creating an environment conducive to respect for human beings, preventing and/or alleviating the immediate effects of a specific pattern of abuse, and restoring dignified conditions of life through reparation, restitution, and rehabilitation. This is a very broad definition that can be applied to nearly every effort that aims to make an improvement in people's access to their rights in any situation. It allows for a holistic approach to protection that includes the access to medical care, freedom of movement, and the recognition of dignity. It has also made humanitarian and development actors more aware of the potential threats and opportunities their interventions pose to the safety and security of affected populations in situations of war and violent conflict as well as natural disasters and famine.

Though protection mainstreaming or 'safe programming' has broadened the discourse about the safety and security of civilians in high-risk situations, it has also created a false impression about the amount of attention and resources dedicated directly to physical safety and security—the core of what most people think of as protection.¹⁹ In order to understand protection within the context of UCP it is useful to distinguish four different areas of protection. These areas are visualized in the multi-layered onion model, shown in figure 3.

18 IDP Protection Policy. (IASC, 1999). The definition was originally adopted by a 1999 Workshop of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Protection.

19 Studies into peacebuilding projects also mention the lack of attention to and the need for direct protection. Comparing 13 case studies on the role of civil society in peacebuilding, Thania Paffenholz mentions this as one of her most striking findings: 'while protection was always highly relevant during armed conflict and war, it was performed only to a far lower degree.' (Paffenholz, 2009, p.6).

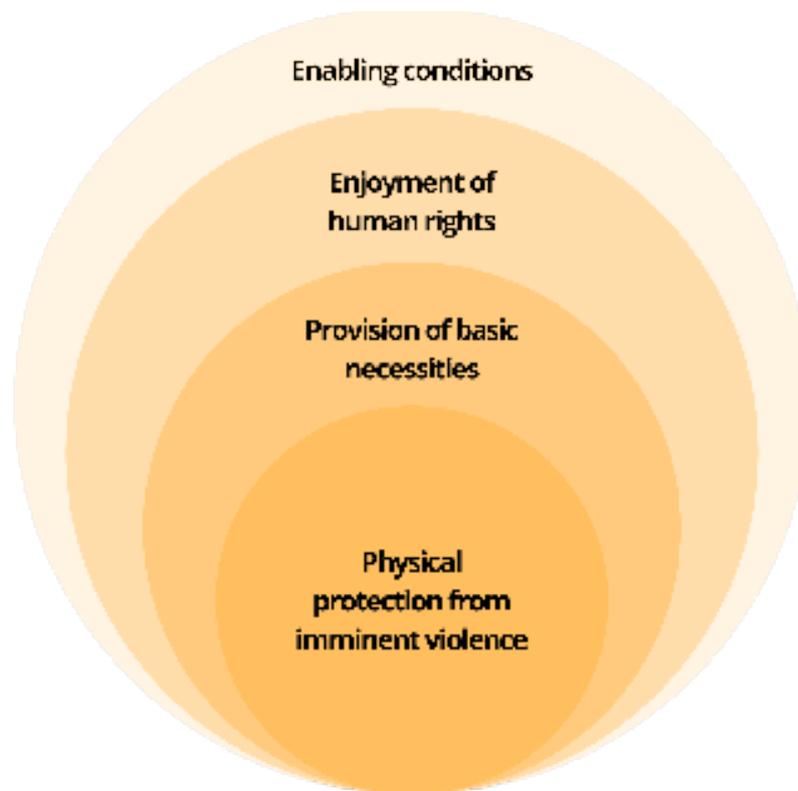


Figure 3: This multi-layered onion model, created by Paul D. Williams (Williams, 2010, p.22), is an adaptation of the ICRC's egg model, depicted in figure 2. It shows four layers of protection. UCP practitioners, like the military, the police, and UN peacekeepers, mainly operate in the red-coloured area of physical protection from imminent violence.

The first and broadest area of protection relates to long-term environment building work that creates the enabling conditions necessary for the enjoyment of human rights. Setting policies and acceding to international conventions form part of this work. It does not target specific moments of abuse. It aims to build structures and capacities to change attitudes in society, which will make abuse less likely to occur in the future. This category is similar to the category of 'environment building' depicted in the ICRC egg model of figure 2.

The second area of protection relates more directly to the enjoyment of human rights. Here the focus is to protect, promote, and fulfil human rights. It aims to raise awareness about injustice or abuse and to reform or remove damaging structures that make abuse more likely. Examples include the promotion of equal rights for women and men, access to justice by minority groups, and attention to good governance practices. Many human rights advocacy groups as well as rights-based development agencies that contribute to protection operate in this area. Unlike the outer layer, this work is generally in reaction to abuses and the threats of abuse.

The third area of protection relates to the provision of basic necessities. Elizabeth Ferris has called this "humanitarian protection" or "access to lifesaving assistance" (Ferris, 2011, loc.3804). It is a more immediate response to a particular situation of violence or

crisis and relates to the incorporation of protection into humanitarian relief. For some, aid itself *is* protection. As Furnari describes in her analysis of local ceasefire monitors in the Philippines, “many believe that aid is a form of protection and protection a form of aid” (Furnari, 2016.) Ferris points out that humanitarian protection is usually not about preventing people from getting hurt, but responding to people who are already hurt (i.e. remedial action). It includes for example the timely delivery of medical assistance to protect survivors of violence from further harm or the provision of life-saving information to populations affected by natural disasters. While one may conclude that the protection efforts of humanitarian agencies fits this category, most agencies would rather place such efforts in the previous layer (i.e. protection as the enjoyment of human rights). They would point out that, in addition to providing lifesaving assistance (in a safe manner), they are taking steps to reduce risk and restore well-being and dignity of people affected by crises (i.e. Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action).

We humanitarians need to be honest about what we call protection. Limited risk reduction or raising awareness should not be branded ‘protection’ activities when we know the word conveys so much more to the public. That is false advertising—placing the shiny wrapper of protection on our work and handing it to a public unable to look inside the box. Put simply, the protection fig-leaf is our creation, and it is our responsibility to put it right.

*Marc DuBois, Executive Director, Médecins Sans Frontières – United Kingdom
(Dubois, 2010, p 4.)*

The fourth area of protection relates to physical protection from imminent violence or physical safety and security. It is based on a minimalist definition of protection as “defending or guarding from imminent danger or injury”. Physical protection includes direct interventions to prevent people from getting hurt and to remove or reduce threats. Traditionally, this has been the domain of the military and the police. Currently, unarmed civilians are increasingly involved in this area of protection, both within UN peace operations and within civil society groups. This reflects the recognition of the unmet need for the protection of civilians. **UCP practitioners can operate in all four areas of protection, but their main focus lies with providing physical protection from imminent violence.**²⁰

PEACEKEEPING

Peacekeeping, as defined by the UN, is action undertaken to preserve peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers (United Nations, n.d., p.97). Peacekeepers are defined as ‘military, police and civilian personnel, who work to deliver security, political and early peacebuilding support’ (United Nations n.d.). Some NGOs that apply UCP also use the

20 The role of UCP practitioners in providing basic necessities is minimal. They usually don’t provide material aid, but they may provide life-saving assistance by, for example, accompanying or transporting survivors of violence to hospitals in rural areas. See also appendix 3 for a comparative chart on UCP and “humanitarian protection.”

term peacekeeping or “keeping peace”. They would define it somewhat differently, i.e. as “action undertaken to prevent or reduce violence, provide direct protection to civilians, and stabilize the environment to make serious peace processes possible” (Carriere, 2011). Furthermore, UCP organizations do not portray their efforts as ‘delivering security’. They prefer to describe their activities as collaborative action undertaken by UCP personnel and local actors to increase the safety and security of vulnerable populations and individuals.

The role of peacekeeping and keeping peace can be understood better when it is contrasted with peacemaking and peacebuilding. Johan Galtung, one of the pioneers of peace research, suggests that all conflicts have three major components (Galtung, 2000). First, there are the *Attitudes* (A) of the conflicting parties. These attitudes tend to become more and more hostile towards each other as the conflict escalates. In order to reach some sort of settlement of the conflict, the parties must first change their attitudes and perceptions of each other. This, broadly speaking, Galtung defined as the process of *peacemaking*. Second, attitudes in conflict situations are very much affected by the *Behaviour* (B) of the belligerents. Escalating degrees of violence make it more and more difficult to see the mutual benefit of ending a conflict. Therefore, it is essential to find ways of tackling the violence itself in order to de-escalate the situation and to enable the peacemaking process to develop. Galtung defines this as the task of *peacekeeping*. Third, there is the matter, or matters, over which the conflict is being waged, or the *Causes* (C) of the conflict. Tackling the actual causes of the conflict or structural violence is what Galtung defines as *peacebuilding* (Wallis & Junge, 2001, p.3).

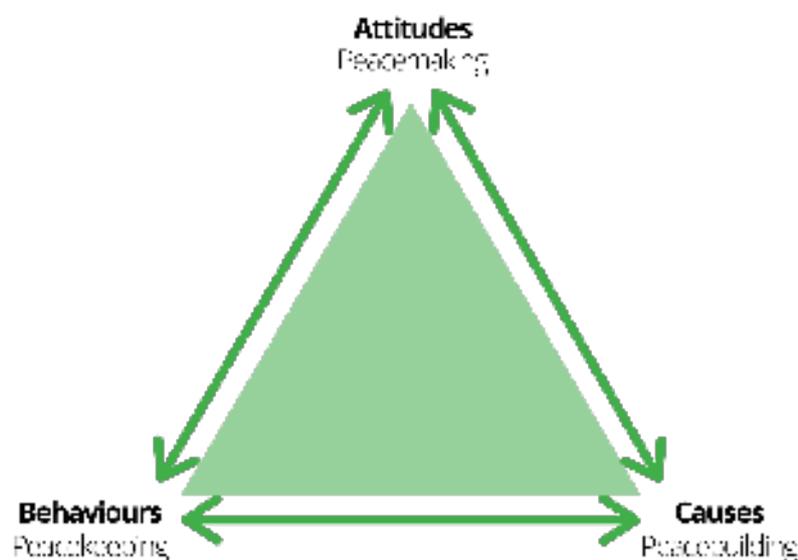


Figure 4: Galtung's ABC Conflict Triangle

Conflicts generally pass through well-recognized stages, including the very early stages of *latent conflict*, which may simmer for years, before yielding to a *confrontation stage*. This is the stage during which attitudes harden and options are closed, until the confrontation turns into a *crisis stage* of actual hostilities. The crisis will sooner or later lead to an *outcome*, a stage in which levels of tension, confrontation, and violence decrease. Finally,

there is at least one *post-crisis* stage, often a precursor to the next conflict and the cycle starting all over again. While described here as linear, as will be discussed later in this course (Module 4), conflict is rarely so neatly segmented. Peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding are usually positioned in specific stages of the conflict. Peacemaking is most often launched after a crisis. Peacekeeping follows peacemaking and is sustained until the situation is stable enough for peacebuilding, which is usually carried out during the post-crisis stage. Though knowledge of the different stages and of the corresponding interventions allow UCP practitioners to better understand the roles they can play in these stages, the reality of peace and war is often more complex. Many conflicts relapse into the crisis stage more than once before entering a more stable post-crisis stage.

The world has been more successful at peacemaking than peacebuilding. According to Uppsala University, in the period between 1975 and 2011, only 125 peace agreements out of 216 were followed by the termination of violence for at least five years (Högbladh, n.d., p.51). Former parties in the conflict often underestimate the complexity of addressing the underlying causes of conflict and resume arms before the peacebuilding process can be completed. Sustained peacekeeping efforts can reduce the chance of a premature return to hostilities. In other words, peacekeeping is a key link between peacemaking and peacebuilding. If effective peacekeeping does not occur, peacemaking, peacebuilding, and development efforts risk failure almost as soon as they have begun—too soon for local actors to address the underlying causes of violence.

As UCP aims to mitigate or prevent violence in order to de-escalate situations, it is essentially a peacekeeping intervention. However, unlike UN peacekeeping, which is generally applied after an official peace agreement has been reached, UCP may be applied in all stages of a conflict. It is generally a ‘bottom up’ approach, starting with individuals and/or communities, while frequently linking to wider arenas of conflict. It can be launched before a crisis occurs to prevent violence. It can also be sustained when peacebuilding efforts are well underway to ensure that the cycle of violence does not start all over again. Depending on the organization mission and context, UCP practitioners may be directly or indirectly involved in peacemaking or peacebuilding. They may accompany peacemaking processes and provide a safer space for local actors to make and build peace. They may also facilitate the contribution of people at the grassroots to ‘track one’²¹ peacemaking activities. Throughout this process UCP practitioners serve to underline the centrality of the protection of civilians. More information about the stages of conflict, and the application of UCP in various stages, will be provided in module 4.

NONVIOLENCE

Nonviolence can be defined as the use of peaceful means, not military or physical coercion, to bring about political or social change. For many, nonviolence is more than that; a way of life, "a kind of energy we can learn to develop and deploy in human interactions" (Nagler, 2020, p.16). According to Martin Luther King, Jr. "Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit.

21 Track One refers to official government diplomacy whereby communication and interaction is between governments. Track Two Diplomacy is the unofficial interaction and intervention of non-state actors. Track Two was coined and developed by the US diplomat Joseph Montville.

You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him” (Cain, 1964). As an ethical philosophy, nonviolence upholds the view that moral behaviour excludes the use of violence; as a political philosophy it maintains that violence is self-perpetuating and can never provide a means to a lasting peaceful end. As a principle, it supports the pacifist position that war and killing are never justified. As a practice, pacifists and non-pacifists have used nonviolence to achieve social change and express resistance to oppression (Peace Pledge Union n.d.). It is this framework of philosophy, principle, and especially practice that distinguishes ‘nonviolence’ from ‘unarmed’. Unarmed only explains that a person or group is not equipped with or carrying weapons. Nonviolence assumes that people take active roles, making choices and commitments and building on their experience.

The degree to which principle, philosophy, and practice are applied greatly differ among practitioners of nonviolence. Some practitioners regard the principle and philosophy as ideal, but not always applicable, or may even reject them altogether. They practice nonviolence because they believe it to be the most effective or least costly strategy for social or political change in a particular situation. They may also use nonviolence for the lack of better alternatives because a military or other violent option is not available or viable. There are also those practitioners who adhere to the principle and philosophy of nonviolence under any circumstances. For these practitioners nonviolence is a moral stance and a way of life. UCP does not choose between these two positions. The fact that nonviolence is a key principle of UCP simply means that it is part of the mandate of UCP agencies and that UCP team members strictly adhere to nonviolence under all circumstances during their employment. It does not imply that individual UCP practitioners view nonviolence as a way of life or a moral stance. Nonviolence will be further explored in section 4 of this module as well as in module 2.

PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Proactive engagement refers first of all to the need of being proactive for the sake of providing protection. This engagement involves building relationships—ideally, in advance of a conflict—with relevant actors and other stakeholders at all levels, from grassroots on up. It also involves opening up and maintaining reliable channels of communications among relevant actors. Those who are working to protect civilians may use relationships and communication channels with conflicting parties on all sides to call for a temporary ceasefire or a humanitarian corridor to evacuate vulnerable populations or individuals. Moreover, proactive engagement involves enhancing the capacities of key actors to ensure protection of civilians. You will find more information on proactive engagement in module 3.

Some UCP practitioners describe the method of proactive engagement as “proactive presence”. Both terms distinguish the method described in the previous paragraph from the presence of international observers who do not purposefully use their presence to maximize its protective potential for civilians. The UN Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect declares that the “presence of the United Nations, INGOs or other international or regional actors in the country and with access to populations” can “contribute to preventing or lessening the impact of serious acts of violence” against vulnerable populations, while the absence of an international presence

increases the risk of atrocities.²² Many observers, monitors, and humanitarian aid staff do make conscious efforts to have a protective influence, even when it is not part of their mandate. When foreign nationals do not or cannot engage proactively, however, their presence may offer some protection, or it may have no effect at all. If they are present and fail to respond, their inaction could even be taken as tacit acceptance of abuses. Just as the presence of food warehouses does not guarantee food security in a famine, so it cannot be assumed that, simply by being there, an international presence provides protection.

What is needed...is not passive presence for its own sake, but well informed and carefully analysed strategies and tactics that use the presence of each [UCP practitioner] to influence all the actors around them.

Liam Mahony, 2006

MONITORING

Monitoring is essentially the practice of observing compliance to a standard. Within the context of civilian protection, this standard usually refers to specific human rights laws or a set of provisions outlined in ceasefire agreements. In conjunction with documenting and reporting, monitoring is usually regarded as a systematic and purposeful collection of data as well as the analysis and dissemination of such data for immediate use by relevant and interested parties.

Within the context of UCP, monitoring goes beyond observing and reporting to designated institutions on compliance with agreements. It involves direct engagement with ceasefire parties or combatants at the field level to prompt immediate interventions to reduce violence against civilians. UCP monitoring may take place within a formal structure, or not. Monitoring within the context of UCP also refers to observing the security situation for the purpose of rumour control or Early Warning Early Response. The observation of political events (e.g. demonstrations, elections), legal proceedings (e.g. trials, tribunals), or social processes (e.g. holidays, celebrations, parades) in situations of potential violence is often referred to as monitoring as well. All of these activities are then a mixture between monitoring and proactive engagement. The monitoring of a trial may be intended to observe compliance to the law as well as to provide protection to lawyers, witnesses, or the accused through physical presence and visibility. More information on monitoring will be provided in module 3.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Building relations with local and international key actors at the grassroots, middle-range, and top levels of society (including, for example, UN Special Rapporteurs) is one of the central components of UCP. Relationships are in a sense the core 'tools' for UCP whether undertaken by local people in self-protection, or by people from outside the community.

22 United Nations, Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes - A tool for prevention, 2014, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/548afd5f4.html> [accessed 14 August 2020]

Relationships are used to prevent or reduce violence, create community acceptance, control rumours, communicate needs, dissuade potential perpetrators, connect communities with duty bearers, and influence decision makers. A crucial element for the effectiveness of UCP comes from establishing, maintaining, and improving relationships with actors who have the power to influence potential perpetrators of violence or parties in conflict. These actors include government representatives, armed actors (state and non-state), clan chiefs, and local religious and community leaders. While establishing such relationships inherently provides some protection, these influential persons can be specifically called upon if and when threats do occur. They may be able to use their influence to dissuade potential perpetrators from actualizing their threat.

CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT

Communities are not blank slates. Capacity enhancement begins with recognizing the protection mechanisms that already exist. It then strengthens knowledge, skills, and abilities that individuals or groups deem relevant. In the context of UCP, capacity is enhanced in order to increase knowledge about and effectiveness of local efforts, mechanisms, and protocols for violence prevention and protection. Capacity enhancement is not limited to training civil society organizations and armed actors, but often involves a longer-term process of supporting local actors, recognizing their own expertise and then exploring their full potential as peacemakers, peacebuilders or human rights defenders. This may include assistance in expanding networks, strengthening security management systems, or the establishment of self-sustaining protection networks. Capacity enhancement at the grassroots level is most effective when it is tailor-made, context-specific, participatory, and embedded in long-term strategies that are driven by local actors. More information on capacity enhancement will be provided in module 3.

1.3

The spectrum of UCP

If you look at the Venn diagram in Figure 1, you see three main regions representing important components defining UCP. One region comprises the key principles of UCP, including, for example, nonviolence, nonpartisanship, independence. Another represents the key sources of guidance: the international conventions on humanitarian protections, human rights law, refugee law, and resolutions regarding women, children, and other vulnerable persons. The third region contains the key methods of UCP: proactive engagement, monitoring, relationship building, and capacity enhancement. The key skills are related to the key methods, but are not central to defining UCP for our purposes. The different components of the diagram will be explored in more detail in module 2 (key principles and sources of guidance) and module 3 (key methods) and module 4 (key skills).

Where the three regions intersect is a triangular shaped area called ‘Core UCP’. This means that efforts of keeping peace and protecting civilians are regarded as ‘UCP’ when they draw on all three regions. The word ‘core’ has been added, because there is no consensus on a definitive list of methods and principles that constitutes ‘UCP proper’. Even where UCP actors follow the same principles and methods, there are subtle differences in their interpretation and application as well as the language that they use to describe them.

Adding to this complexity is the fact that UCP organizations rarely, if ever, apply the identified principles, methods, and sources of guidance all together in the exact same format. Instead, they are used in a strategic mix selected on a case-by-case basis, specific to focused populations and conflict and appropriate to context. Therefore, UCP will look different in different situations and at different phases of the conflict. It is more of a systems approach than a static set of practices. An overly rigid definition of UCP ignores the necessary flexibility and systemic nature of this practice and could stifle its creativity. Hence, this section presents UCP as a spectrum of efforts that are more or less ‘core UCP’. Examples and case studies will be used throughout the course modules to illustrate the variety of situations and responses.

This spectrum of UCP can be placed within a wider field of unarmed (and armed) efforts for the protection of civilians (see figure 2 and 3, section 1.2). As stated before, a whole host of actors are involved in addressing the protection needs of civilians (see definition of protection in section 2 above). The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), for example, is a well-known unarmed, nonpartisan, civilian actor that engages parties in situations of violent conflict to prevent violence. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the African Union (AU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also organize unarmed missions with civilians, sometimes in conjunction with armed interventions and sometimes not. UN peace operations (managed by the UN’s Department of Peace Operations, DPO) include police and other civilians whose work concerns protection, although these personnel typically are less than 15% of the mission.

Whether these actors and the organizations they represent should be placed inside (at the edges) or outside of the UCP spectrum is debatable. One could argue that most of these organizations are aligned to or reliant on armed forces. Furthermore, none of them are independent of agendas and commitments made by international bodies far from the field and often controlled by complex geo-political power relationships. Others argue that these multi-lateral organizations cannot carry out UCP fully, but they can use various UCP methods to expand their ability to protect. Some people have argued that the efforts of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal, could be regarded as UCP (see module 3). A similar case could be made for the unarmed EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia that has contributed to improving the security situation through visible presence and daily patrolling in high-risk areas, reporting of incidents, and confidence building (EUMM, n.d.). UN Volunteers, too, have found themselves in situations where they performed UCP (Weiss & Minear, 1996). As previously mentioned, although the presence of international field staff (whether election monitors, human rights monitors, or humanitarian aid staff) may in itself have some protective impact, UCP implies consciously and intentionally using presence to protect other civilians. The ICRC is a special case: it has legally defined rights, of long

standing, to be active in zones of war.²³ As a hybrid IGO-INGO it is specifically mandated to ensure compliance with the Geneva Conventions and related humanitarian laws, with a focus on the protection of prisoners of war and political prisoners, but also on other victims of armed conflicts to whom it provides humanitarian relief assistance (Carriere, 2011).²⁴

If a classification were to be made, however, the UCP spectrum could be distinguished from the wider field of unarmed protection efforts by:

- 1. a reliance on physical presence at the community level to respond to imminent threats of violence:** Field level means the place where violence takes place, whether that is an isolated jungle or the suburbs of a modern city. High-level diplomacy, training and advocacy may play a significant role, but immediate responses on ground are the centre of gravity;²⁵
- 2. deep engagement with communities:** Strategies and practices are developed with communities, enhancing many of the protection mechanisms that they already have in place;
- 3. the centrality of direct protection methods:** While their actual use may be limited in some areas or periods, they remain at the core of violence prevention and protection strategies; and
- 4. a deliberate use of Nonviolent methods to protect civilians.** This implies a shift in thinking about the use of and reliance on (the threat of) force. It underlines the distinction between unarmed and Nonviolent.

While definitions and models have their limitations, they help to clarify the niche that UCP fills. It operates primarily within the innermost circle of the protection onion (Figure 3), unlike most other humanitarian efforts. Traditionally, this is the domain of the military and the police. Currently, unarmed civilians are increasingly involved in this area of protection, within UN peace operations, humanitarian programs and within civil society groups. This reflects the growing recognition of the unmet need for the protection of civilians (Paffenholz, 2009). UCP practitioners can operate in all four circles of the protection “onion”, but their main focus lies with providing physical protection from imminent violence.

In no way does this differentiation imply a value judgement about the effectiveness or contribution of organizations that operate in other layers of the protection field. In fact, they all share the terrain, having different peace mandates, fulfilling complementary roles in protecting civilians, deterring violence and developing local peace infrastructures. Our interest here is to highlight the unique role that UCP plays among the various layers of protection work.

23 The ICRC also has financial security, with significant funding from governments.

24 ICRC also sets authoritative standards for protection actors constituting the minimum obligations that apply to any humanitarian or human rights organization (including UCP organizations) engaged in protection work in armed conflict and other situations of violence (ICRC 2013).

25 Some UCP organizations don't operate at the field level because of government restrictions, but they still focus their efforts on field-based protection responses, albeit indirectly, through enhancing local capacity for UCP.