2.2

Key principles of UCP

UCP methods and activities are governed by the application of a specific set of principles. There are six such principles: nonviolence, nonpartisanship, the primacy of local actors, independence, and civilian leadership. It is important to note that UCP organizations view these principles differently. Nonpartisanship in particular is not embraced by all UCP organizations. This section describes each of these six UCP principles. It also clarifies how the principles are applied by UCP practitioners to achieve the two key objectives. Principles become practice by putting them into action.

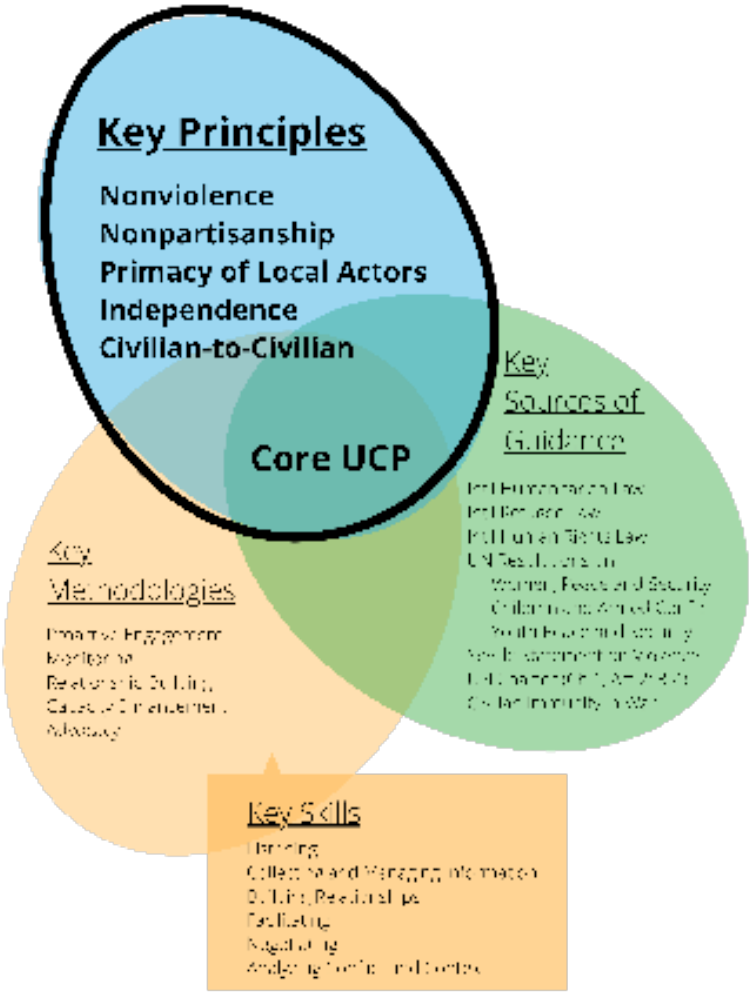

Figure 4: Focus on Key Principles of Unarmed Civilian Protection

2.2.1
Nonviolence

> *Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon … which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals.*
>
> *Martin Luther King. (1964). Why We Can't Wait, New York, NY: Harper and Row.*

In Module 1, nonviolence was explained as the use of peaceful means or a kind of energy to bring about social and political change, maintain the status quo, and/or transform oneself. Module 1 also showed that there is a long worldwide tradition of nonviolence and that nonviolent struggle has been more effective in bringing about social and political change than violent struggle. Finally, UCP was presented as a fusion between nonviolence and peacekeeping. It includes and discards some aspects of both traditions from which it originates.

Not relying on the use of armed or physical force, UCP practitioners need alternative means to prevent violence and protect civilians. Without such means, UCP would not be able to achieve much. It finds alternative means in nonviolence. Some peaceful means to bring about social and political change, such as negotiation, are so widely used, even by militaries, that they are hardly thought of as 'nonviolent'. Unlike militaries, however, UCP practitioners cannot pick and choose between force and nonviolence. If they were to use force, even momentarily, they would fundamentally change their role in the conflict and risk losing their reputation as well as the acceptance and trust they had built with conflict parties, thereby weakening their ability to protect themselves and others. They would also pose a different threat to armed actors and be more at risk for attracting attacks. Understanding the rules and the worldview in which nonviolence is grounded allows UCP practitioners to make optimal use of the methods and tactics that are available to them.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NONVIOLENCE — STRATEGY, PRINCIPLES, PARTICIPANTS, AND TACTICS

This section provides an overview of some characteristics of nonviolence that are relevant for UCP. It clarifies the approach to protection and security on which UCP theory and practice are built. The identified characteristics will be explored in comparison to some of the characteristics of violent struggle. This comparison is relevant as UCP applies a nonviolent approach within a context of violent conflict and a culture of war. Rather than merely presenting an unarmed alternative that operates within the same paradigm of violent struggle, reinforcing the culture of militarization and war, UCP presents a different paradigm, one rooted in nonviolence. By operating within this paradigm UCP can become an invitation to actively support a shift towards a culture working with conflict in nonviolent and peaceful ways. This shift represents the most sustainable form of peace.

Adopting this paradigm requires a completely different mindset that is the opposite of seeking containment, punishment, and/or defeat. Instead, it seeks to win over enemies as allies, broadening options to meet their needs in less violent ways and not separating the means from the end goals. It also accepts the risks and suffering that is inherent in this work, while refraining from inflicting suffering on others. This is often a choice based on principles or ethics, but it is also a strategic choice. Those UCP actors that adopt nonviolence primarily as a tactical choice, may not seek to win over enemies as allies nor to broaden their response options. Yet in most ways they still function within the paradigm and principles of nonviolence.[5]

UCP practitioners aim first and foremost to prevent violence and protect threatened civilians. Winning over a perpetrator of violence or abuse as an ally is perhaps the most sustainable way of preventing violence and increasing the safety and security of threatened civilians. This requires a belief in the humanity and potential for good in those perpetrating violence. Transforming a relationship of opposition to one of cooperation has many potential benefits beyond the immediate goal of security, but while this would be an ideal outcome, it is often not possible. The fact that UCP practitioners do use pressure does not mean that they lose sight of the humanity of the perpetrators of violence. If violence can only be prevented through the use of pressure, they will not hesitate to use it, but will always strive to do so without weapons, hatred or ill-intent.

Principle: ***Whereas in violent struggle the ends justify the means, in nonviolent struggle there is no contradiction between the means and ends.***

> *The instrumentalist defense of violence depends quite crucially on being able to show that violence can be restricted to the status of a tool, a means, without becoming an end itself. The use of the tool to realize such purposes presupposes that the tool is guided by a clear intention and remains so guided throughout the course of the action. It also depends on knowing when the course of a violent action will come to an end. What if violence is precisely the kind of phenomenon that is constantly "getting out of hand"?*
>
> *Judith Butler. The Force of Nonviolence (2020, pp. 13-14).*

Gandhi often said that means and ends were two sides of the same coin, meaning that they could not be separated from one another. When any of us commit acts of violence, we are, in and through those acts, building a more violent world. Furthermore, by using violent means for nonviolent ends, we project our ideals of peace onto an imaginary point in a future that is not subjected to change. Nonviolence pulls us back to the present moment and invites us to be the change we wish to see in the world. For this reason, many UCP actors see protection as a process rather than an end result.

When UCP is effective in preventing violence, it can have a powerful impact. It demonstrates that a nonviolent approach to conflict and violence is more than just

5 There is ongoing debate within UCP organizations about the use of principled nonviolence versus tactical nonviolence. The presentation in this section draws heavily on concepts that characterize principled nonviolence, because it shows a clearer contrast between the paradigm of UCP practitioners and that of force protection actor and how they think differently about security. It also shows UCP's potential for cultural change.

an ideal. It challenges the assertion that violence may be needed to bring peace. This message is most effective when individual UCP practitioners demonstrate the values of nonviolence at all times, in interactions with state and non-state armed groups, local government, humanitarian agencies, people in the community, in their own teams and within themselves. Practitioners who are not living in their own community typically live within communities they are protecting, where their attitudes and behaviour are closely observed. Even the perception of 'violent' attitudes or behaviour can have a negative impact on the work of UCP. When UCP actors embody the values of nonviolence in an environment of violence and mistrust, their presence can become a beacon of inspiration.

Strategy: ***Whereas the strategy of violent struggle is to threaten or actually inflict suffering to force the opponent to accede, the strategy of nonviolent struggle is to change the mind of the opponent, who then changes behaviour.***

Too often dismissed without being attempted, the strategy of changing the opponent's mind is based on the belief that both victim and perpetrator share a common humanity. It does not depend on the assumption that people are inherently 'good'. In fact, it recognizes the potential for both 'good' and 'evil' in all people, including the extremes of altruism and cruelty. Writer and activist Barbara Deming used to speak of the two hands of nonviolence. One hand, upraised with palm facing forward, says, "I will not put up with your injustice." The other, extended with palm facing upward in a gesture of welcome, says "but I'm open to you as a human being." To do that, you must believe that behind all of your opponent's hostility is a human being (Nagler, 2019, p.7). In order to speak to the humanity of another, especially one that has been buried by traumas of war or shielded by armour, the UCP actor needs to be in touch with their own humanity and open up first. Being physically unarmed is a first step, mental disarmament a second. Zen teacher Charlotte Joko Beck explains how this works:

> *Let's imagine for a moment that humans are large ice cubes... Often we hit each other hard enough to shatter our edges. Out of fear, we freeze as hard as we can to protect ourselves; and, hope that when we collide with others, they will shatter before we do. Our fear makes us hard and rigid. Any obstacle or unexpected difficulty is likely to shatter us... But, a lucky few, may meet an ice cube that has actually melted and become a puddle. What happens if an ice cube meets a puddle? The warmer water in the puddle begins to melt the ice cube, making it a little mushy. Even if we only melt slightly, others around us soften too. It's a fascinating process… The ice cube begins to realize that it does not have to be hard, rigid and cold… The more melting that occurs, the more we attract others and allow a safe space for them to melt too.*
>
> *Charlotte Joko Beck, Nothing Special: Living Zen (1993)*

While it may appear idealistic to transform a hardened human rights abuser into an ally, there is a whole spectrum of possible relations between the extremes of enmity and alliance that UCP actors can explore. Even a superficial relationship can make it harder for the abuser to maintain their aggression, in the same way that it is more difficult to be rude to another driver on the road once you've established eye contact. Such relationships can also open up communication. In these ways UCP actors have found that security can be obtained not just through separation and distancing but also through connection

and proximity.
It is important for UCP actors to regularly check their own biases and stereotypes and resist simplifying complex social relations into good or bad entities, especially when they live among marginalized and oppressed populations. Women are often assumed to be pro-peace, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) filled with altruistic people, and soldiers supportive of war. In reality, such assumptions may not be true. Appealing to the humanity of all actors is integral to building relationships of trust and acceptance with them, including— whenever possible and appropriate—with perpetrators and other actors who are difficult to reach. The greater their ability to acknowledge the intrinsic humanity of these actors, the more likely UCP practitioners will gain trust and acceptance from these actors. This trust and acceptance may then provide them with the necessary leverage to protect civilians in times of need.

Participants: ***Whereas violent struggle demands participants who are willing and able to injure and kill other humans, nonviolent actions inherently require and invite a much broader and more diverse base of participation.***

UCP requires a broad and diverse base, and actively promotes the involvement of local actors as peacemakers, peacekeepers, and peacebuilders, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or physical abilities. One could even say that UCP democratizes security by viewing everyone as a potential protector and reduces the division between protector and protected. Many UCP teams not only include national or local staff, they also strengthen the capacity of local peace infrastructures. Furthermore, they create platforms for at-risk groups to express their needs and concerns, and connect peacemakers at the grassroots level with relevant actors at the middle-range and top level. UCP personnel, whether local or international, have inspired local actors to embrace nonviolent action in the midst of surrounding conflict. People learn that, contrary to popular perception, they do not have to be pacifists or saints nor have a particular educational degree or intellectual background to practice nonviolence.

Tactics: ***Whereas secrecy and force are commonly used to limit options for response in violent struggles, transparency, trust, and acceptance are commonly used to open opportunities for response in nonviolent struggles.***

In order to build trust and acceptance, UCP practitioners generally ensure that their actions are transparent and are perceived as such by all relevant actors.[6] UCP actors usually make sure that their movements are known to security actors and potential perpetrators, especially when it comes to high profile accompaniments. They may even ask state security forces to support them in carrying out accompaniments, even though they suspect that those same forces are the source of threats. They use transparency as a way to dissuade those actors from carrying out these threats and deny them the option of putting up a smokescreen around potential attacks. Moreover, transparency provides protection to UCP actors. It may prevent them from stumbling into a dangerous situation that they might have otherwise been warned about. If encouragement does not yield any result and deterrence is unlikely to have an effect, rather than resorting to secrecy or deception, a different strategy needs to be found. When local actors at-risk want

6 There are cases when the safety of a civilian requires secrecy, for example, in helping someone under threat to go to a safe location.

their movements to be kept secret, UCP actors may identify different ways to support them, such as providing regular phone calls, connecting them to influential actors, or enhancing capacity in self-protection.

Even the perception of secrecy is generally avoided so that UCP teams do not appear to pose a threat to anyone. In case pressure is applied to confront potential perpetrators with the consequences of their actions, UCP practitioners work to illuminate any possible paths for positive responses.[7] Moreover, they need to be willing to remove the pressure when a positive response is forthcoming, and, when appropriate, to provide positive feedback for actions that respect the rights of civilians. Understanding the logic of violence and promoting the search for alternatives are important components of nonviolent action.

Finally, UCPs need to balance transparency with confidentiality. As a rule of thumb, UCP personnel are advised to be transparent about their actions and movements, while maintaining confidentiality when it comes to the details of (sensitive) protection cases.

> *Gandhi would always offer full details of his plans and movements to the police, thereby saving them a great deal of trouble. One police inspector who availed himself of Gandhi's courtesy in this matter is said to have been severely reprimanded by his chief. 'Don't you know,' he told the inspector, 'that everyone who comes into close contact with that man goes over to his side?'*
>
> *Reginald Reynolds, in A Quest for Gandhi, Doubleday (1952)*

Recommended Resources for Further Study (View)

- Michael Nagler. (2013). Degrees of Nonviolence, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oo2x44L72GU

Recommended Resources for Further Study (Read)

- Chenoweth, E & Stephan, M. (2011). Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict. Chapter 1. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

7 Ensuring that options are available is not always under the control of UCP personnel—for example, in the case where consequences of a perpetrator's actions include arrest by the International Criminal Court.

2.2.2 Nonpartisanship

WHAT IS NONPARTISANSHIP?

Being nonpartisan means not choosing or taking sides in a conflict. Nonpartisanship does not mean indifference or passivity; nor is it the same as neutrality. Neutrality means not taking sides *and* not helping or supporting any party in a conflict. Nonpartisan actors proactively engage in a conflict. They may work against injustice and the violations of human rights, or for personal dignity and individual freedom, as means for establishing an enduring peace. Nonpartisanship is not about pro- or anti-government. To be nonpartisan is to say, 'We will be at your side in the face of injustice and suffering, but we will not take sides against those you define as enemies' (Mahony & Eguren, (1997) p.236).

HOW DOES NONPARTISANSHIP RELATE TO UCP?

Most international humanitarian organizations are either nonpartisan or neutral. This enables them to prioritize humanitarian rather than political considerations and gives them (on most occasions) a sort of 'diplomatic immunity'. They are allowed access to 'war theaters' from which they would be prohibited were they perceived as 'working for' one side or another in a conflict. UCP practitioners, in particular, are usually nonpartisan, though there is a spectrum of implementation of this principle (see below). They are committed to the dignity, security, and wellbeing of all and to the struggle against violence. And while there is some variation of degree on this, they generally avoid partisan interests or taking the side of any party. This approach allows them to build relationships with all parties, wherever possible, and gain their trust and acceptance. UCP practitioners are not considered to be neutral, as they openly and clearly support and promote human rights, security for all, and the peaceful transformation of conflicts.

In practice, fully embracing nonpartisanship implies that UCP practitioners:

- Deal with all parties, whenever possible, with an open mind;
- Report as objectively as possible;
- Refrain from judgmental responses, despite possible emotional identification with the oppressed or with a victim;
- Voice concerns to those responsible without being accusatory;
- Do not become involved in the work of the groups or individuals they assist or

protect;[8]
- Share the tools of protection and conflict resolution they have at their disposal, without intervening or imposing their own opinions.

Not all organizations that apply UCP define themselves as 'nonpartisan' and among those who do, nonpartisanship is interpreted and applied differently from one organization or project to another. The ICRC defines itself as 'neutral', even though they are proactively engaged in a conflict and do help and support parties in conflict to some extent. Peace Brigades International (PBI) and Nonviolent Peaceforce both define themselves as nonpartisan, but apply the principle in different ways. Christian Peacemaker Teams, on the other hand, do not define themselves as nonpartisan. Expressing the principle of supporting those who are confronting systems of violence and oppression and drawing on the traditions of civil disobedience, they figuratively and literally 'get in the way' of oppression, injustice, and violations of human rights. Local organizations doing self-protection work are often seen as partisan simply based on their ethnicity or other identity markers. This may or may not be accurate. Many local efforts are, in fact, partisan for particular issues, even while practicing UCP. See figure 5, below, for a spectrum of nonpartisanship within UCP.

> *After one cross-organisation unarmed civilian protection workshop I attended, a representative from CPT [Christian Peacemaker Teams] reflected that "the thing that I found scary was the way that neutrality was thrown around. Personally, I don't understand neutrality or non-partisanship if you understand what racism and privilege look like on a large scale. If CPT was more neutral we would be more well known, but I'd rather be part of a team that is proud to align ourselves with justice."*
>
> *Felicity Gray, (2020), A different kind of weapon': Ethical landscapes of nonviolent civilian protection p.10*

8 The level of noninvolvement is an issue of debate and interpretation among UCP implementing organizations. Some projects, for example, insist on only conducting 'workshops' instead of 'training' to emphasize the role of UCP personnel as catalysts or facilitators of dialogue and learning between local actors rather than as trainers who transfer external knowledge, ideas, and skills to local actors. Other projects are more flexible, but most of them make sure they don't impose their own ideas onto local actors or tell them what to do. Such essential details are often dealt with in the basic agreements or terms of reference between the UCP organization and the conflict parties that have invited it.

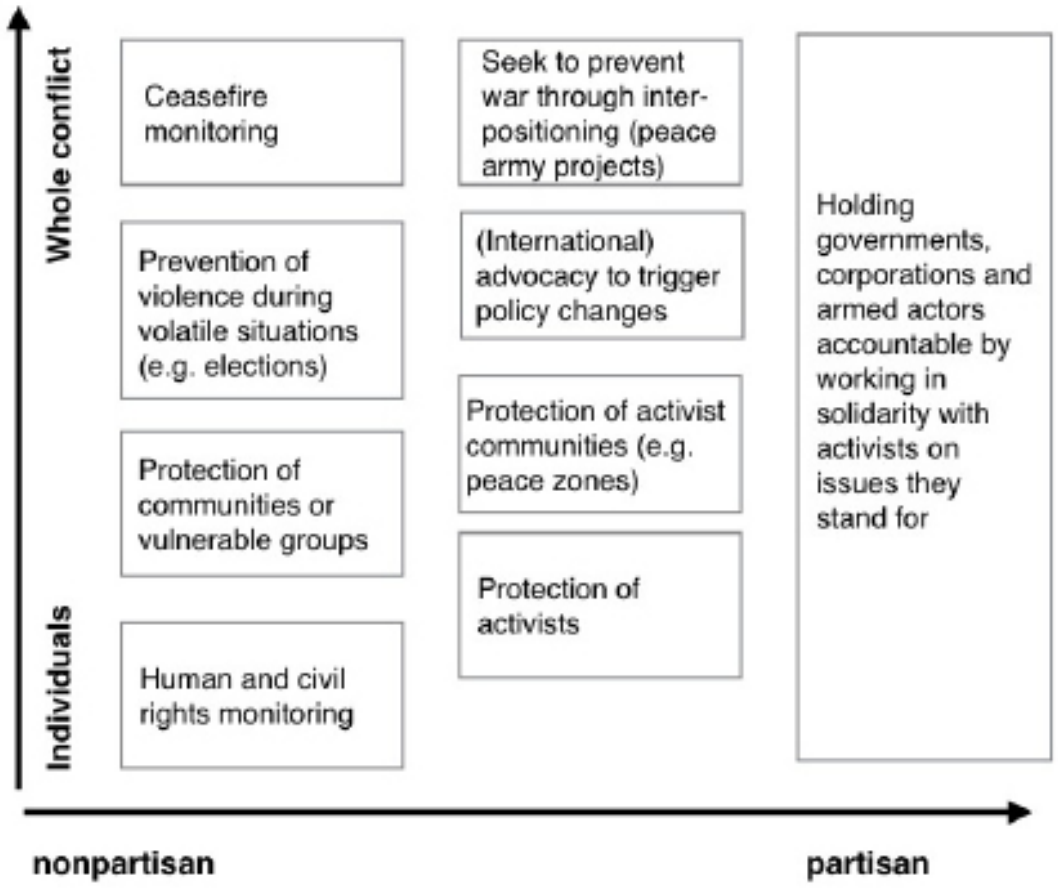

Figure 5 the spectrum of nonpartisanship within UCP, adapted from Schweitzer, (2010 p.13): Not all organizations that apply UCP define themselves as nonpartisan. Though it is difficult to draw clear lines between a nonpartisan and partisan approach to UCP, those who stand in solidarity with at-risk populations and individuals and the issues they fight for are generally not considered to be nonpartisan. Nonetheless, they find many of the UCP strategies to be effective.

CHALLENGES OF NONPARTISANSHIP[9]

Nonpartisanship is perhaps the most challenging principle of UCP, especially at the field level. Many UCP practitioners are personally committed to justice and human rights. In the face of overt injustice, when no action is taken to address the injustice, they find it challenging to refrain from taking a stand.

Challenges to adhering to nonpartisanship include:

- Dealing with all parties with an open mind, and with open eyes and ears (internal conflicts might be hidden);
- Putting aside one's biases and prejudices as best as possible when reporting;
- Voicing concerns to those responsible for abuse without being accusatory. This is where the difference between nonpartisan and neutrality may become problematic;
- Separating acts of violence from the people who commit those acts or the institutions to which they belong. In the beginning, when they are still new in the area, this may

9 Some of these challenges mentioned in this section will be explored in more detail in module 5.

be easier for UCP team members, but after witnessing on-going acts of violence from a specific group or institution, it becomes much more difficult;
- Maintaining transparency (key stakeholders must know what UCP teams are doing—suspicion means increased security risks), while at the same time maintaining the confidentiality and trust of vulnerable individuals and groups, who may suffer abuse from the same key stakeholders;[10]
- Maintaining relationships and acceptance from key stakeholders (especially national governments, non-state actors) that tolerate or propagate violence and abuse, while adhering to mandate and principles (protecting human rights), which challenge these stakeholders. Operating with a lower profile (behind the scenes, but not secret) is an option, but it can lead to a perception of legitimizing violence and abuse;
- Acknowledging that no matter what UCP actors do to dispel perceptions of impartiality, one or more conflicting parties is likely to keep seeing them as partisan (for a long time), especially if the UCP practitioners are local actors.
- Responding to pressure from international groups to name and shame.

Nonpartisanship can be especially challenging for local UCP actors. Not only do they need to navigate their prejudices, identities, and perceived social roles in their own communities, but conflicting parties will more likely see them as either on their side or against them. Often times they overcome this hurdle to some extent by joining a collective that displays a more balanced representation of identities and interests. Ultimately, nonpartisanship needs to be proven on the ground, through balanced relationship building and effective action.

Though challenging, the presence of a nonpartisan third party has been a missing link in many societies struggling to emerge from violent conflict. The realization that it is possible to build a relationship with military actors and even gain their support in protecting civilians, (particularly at the local level), often brings about a major shift in attitude and behaviour among local UCP actors. As this relationship grows, they may find themselves approached from all sides of the community with requests for assistance. A similar shift has occurred in regard to police or military actors. They have often accustomed themselves to the idea that communities fear or despise them and may welcome the opportunity to change this perception.

> *I came very armored and defended. I was ready for people to hate me because I was a police officer. That happens a lot, even among people who share my progressive politics. They'd see the uniform and immediately make a decision about who I was. That's the attitude I came there with, and what happened? Imagine a red dot on a whiteboard. That's where I was living, in the red dot… police officers need your support. They need your understanding. I've seen what happens when they get it. They need to hear from you, they need to understand you.*
>
> *Cheri Maples, Mindfulness and the Police, True Peace Work, 2016, kindle edition pp. 274-275 and 288*

10 See International Committee of the Red Cross Professional Standards 2013)

2.2.3
Primacy of local actors

> *I made a conclusion after my three missions. We can't solve the problems in these countries by being there. We are not the only answer, there is so much more answer to solving that problem, and that is the people themselves. But we can give them some peace and stability, so they can develop it themselves, that is the only way.*
>
> *Former UN peacekeeper quoted in Furnari, 2014 p. 167.*

WHAT IS THE PRIMACY OF LOCAL ACTORS?

The phrase 'primacy of local actors' refers to the principle that local actors have the right and responsibility to determine their own futures, govern their own country or community, and solve their own problems. In the context of violent conflict this means that third parties can support, protect, and/or collaborate with local actors, while recognizing that the local actors remain the drivers of peace processes, development, and socio-political change. The principle of the primacy of local actors is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21/3: "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government" as well as UN peacekeeping guidelines and numerous humanitarian agency reports (Paffenholz, 2015).

Though 'local actor' can be defined as an inhabitant of a particular area or neighbourhood, it is not always clear who is considered a local actor and who is not. In situations of violent conflict it is not uncommon for people to spend extensive periods of time in refugee camps, IDP camps, or among diaspora groups before returning to their place of origin. International organizations may count IDPs among local actors, but their host communities may view them as outsiders. Even when there is consensus about who is a local actor and who is not, the issue of primacy remains difficult as different groups of local actors may have opposing views about 'the will of the people'. Additionally, some local actors are more accessible, due to language, location, leadership positions, etc., and their views tend to be understood as 'the will of the people'. It may take consistent outreach efforts to engage with those less accessible, less included in a community, or with less of a public voice. Most UCP organizations give primacy to one or some combination of the groups that have invited them, the actors who are most harmfully impacted by the violence, or those that are the focus of protection activities.

HOW DOES THE PRIMACY OF LOCAL ACTORS RELATE TO UCP?

Firstly, recognizing the primacy of local actors means that international UCP personnel respect the rights of local partners, state duty bearers, at-risk groups, and other actors to make decisions for themselves as individuals. Secondly, this means that UCP teams, with very few exceptions, adhere to the laws, rules, and regulations of the national government. When operating outside their own countries, they generally, though not

always, refrain from protests, boycotts, civil disobedience, or other forms of nonviolent non-cooperation. At the same time, UCP practitioners may provide protection to local actors engaging in nonviolent action. Thirdly, the primacy of local actors means that civilians of a community experiencing violent conflict are regarded as the decision makers on matters regarding their community. This includes the decision to invite UCP teams to live and work in their neighbourhoods and to remain there, as well as the decision to receive particular protection services.

Adhering to the primacy of local actors is not only a matter of respect; it is also a matter of strategy. The effectiveness of UCP, as well as the security of its peacekeepers and beneficiaries, depends on the acceptance and trust of UCP personnel from most community members, and at least bare tolerance from all community members and an absence of credible direct threats. Moreover, UCP assumes that local people best understand their own conditions, contexts, and potential solutions. If, on the other hand, primacy would lie with UCP teams, they would be held responsible for important decisions and solutions affecting the community. Acceptance by all parties would become increasingly difficult and nonpartisanship impossible. Furthermore, it is essential to the objective of capacity enhancement that all local actors recognize and assert their own agency in creating the context for security.

While the primacy of local actors is primarily intended for international UCP actors, it is also relevant for national and even local UCP actors to reflect on. Ethnic minority communities in conflict-affected peripheries often regard national NGOs based in capital cities as outsiders, or even affiliated with the national government and security forces. Even UCP actors that consider themselves part of the community may be considered as outsiders by village people or religious minority groups that they are trying to protect. Ultimately the principle of primacy aims to support the leadership of, or provide ownership to, immediate participants in protection processes.[11]

An important consideration in recognizing the primacy of local actors is to avoid negative impacts of UCP. Most negative impacts of third-party intervention in situations of conflict are caused by failure to recognize the primacy of local actors. Ignorance, arrogance, or lack of capacity, ability, or urgency to respond to an emergency situation are all factors that may play a role in generating negative impacts (see box 2).

BOX 2| NEGATIVE IMPACTS THAT UCP AIMS TO AVOID BY MAINTAINING THE PRIMACY OF LOCAL ACTORS

Increasing threat to civilians: Agencies' actions or 'aura of expertise' may cause a false sense of security leading people to take risks they would not otherwise take; agencies may put people in dangerous situations; participation in an agency programme or affiliation makes people become targets; agencies may not explicitly analyze and discuss with local partners the differences in risk each faces in a particular context.

11 The expression 'beneficiaries of protection services' is increasingly being substituted for the word 'participants in protection processes', to emphasize the participatory and non-transactional nature of protection processes within the context of UCP.

Worsening divisions between conflicting groups: Agencies may underestimate the depth of divisions and not be prepared to deal with problems, or may not have the skills or experience to manage a tension-filled situation, or may claim to be playing a neutral role but openly become advocates for one side.

Reinforcing structural or overt violence: Agencies may accept partisan conditions placed by the more powerful side in a conflict, or influential outside states, in order to conduct a programme; agencies may tolerate or fail to challenge behaviour that affirms the perceptions of superiority and inferiority of people in conflict.

Diverting human and material resources from local initiatives and mechanisms: Agencies may come in with preset ideas and models, and not listen to what local people want or need; agencies may focus too much on 'talking about the past conflict' rather than on actions that can be taken to change the situation; foreign agencies may hire local activists, pulling their energies away from promising local initiatives.

Increasing cynicism: Agencies may create unrealistic expectations within communities; agencies may not be transparent about their activities with communities so that rumours and suspicions promote cynicism.
Disempowering local people: Agencies may teach people things they already know, conveying the message that expatriates know best; agencies may give the impression that they are 'taking care of the situation'; agencies may implement programmes in a way that fosters dependency on outside 'experts' and at times undermines local expertise and organizations; foreign agencies may work exclusively with the NGO sector and avoid engagement with government structures, fostering resentment and competition; agencies from the outside may not know when to leave.

Excerpted from: Confronting War. Critical Lessons For Peace Practitioners, Mary B. Anderson, Lara Olson with Kristin Doughty, The Collaborative for Development Action Inc, Cambridge MA, 2003, p. 21-26

Recommended Resources for Further Study (View)

- Anderson, M. B. (Ed.) Do No Harm: *How Aid Can Support Peace - Or War.* http://www.medicalpeacework.org/fileadmin/user_upload/videos/Mary_B_Anderson.wmv

2.2.4
Independence

In a series of good practices workshops conducted in 2017 and 2018[12], it became clear that independence is understood differently and valued differently among UCP organizations. UCP organizations are virtually all independent in the sense that they set their own agendas. Many are independent from the agendas of large international institutions such as the UN, and any interest group or political party. Many international UCP organizations are independent of ideology, though some are affiliated with religious organizations or creeds[13]. Some, especially local organizations, are connected to elements of the community and may not identify as independent, though they set their own programmes. For almost all, their strategies and programmes are not an extension of the policy of governments, private companies, political parties or religious groups. This allows them to focus their attention and resources on the protection needs of at-risk groups wherever they are located, whatever they stand for.

There are a few international and local UCP groups that see themselves not only in the service of the people they protect, but also working under their direction. In that sense they do not see themselves as fully independent. Being independent, however, does not contradict the primacy of local actors. While all organizations work to understand and support local capacities and address locally articulated needs, UCP organizations have the responsibility to decide which local views they give primacy to in any given context and based on their missions.

Being independent, as almost all groups are, also reinforces the principle of nonpartisanship. In order to strengthen the perception of independence, most UCP agencies make a conscious effort to obtain funding from multiple sources. They may decide not to accept funds from parties to the conflict or from beneficiaries of the conflict or the project. Some UCP organizations apply other social responsibility screens to their donors such as not accepting money from weapons manufacturers. Most also rely on substantial contributions from individuals. In the interests of transparency and trust building, it is important that the source of funds is disclosed to local actors. The perceived independence of UCP agencies can be a contributing factor in the decision of conflict parties to invite them for roles such as official ceasefire monitors of a peace process.

12 https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/what-we-do/developing-and-expanding-the-field

13 Some are affiliated with a specific religion (e.g., Christian Peacemaker Teams) from which they derive their humanitarian philosophy or funding, but their aim is universal civilian protection, not to proselytize.

NP Photo / Rocelyn Ello /
Awareness session with former military group in Bentiu, South Sudan / March 2021

2.2.5
Civilian-led[14]

'Civilian-led' interventions in the context of UCP refer to the partnership (whether formal or informal cooperation) between (international or national) UCP organizations and local civil society actors. While 'civilian-led' is described by some as 'community-led'—contrasting a "bottom-up response to the traditional top-down monitoring conducted by INGOs and UN experts" (Puttick 2017)—it refers here to the notion that the UCP organization itself and the local people most engaged with it are civilians, not operating as part of a military organization. This distinguishes it from government-driven efforts as well as UN peacekeeping operations, in which military actors play a leading role.

The relationship between UCP organizations and communities usually starts with the invitation from local actors for UCP organizations to establish a legal, physical presence in their country, and in specific communities within that country. It is the opposite of traditional international interventions that start with high level agreements and plans developed elsewhere. It is a deliberate attempt to move away from armed groups as the sole actors involved in providing protection and managing security. It is also a way to build the confidence of civil society to increase its role as peacemakers, peacekeepers, and peacebuilders. In many contexts civilian-led efforts strengthen 'bottom up' peace processes or help to shift attention to the needs and experiences of local communities.

Though the principle may be clear in theory, it sometimes creates confusion for UCP agencies at the field level. In areas of protracted conflict, a disproportionately large segment of society has been, or still is, affiliated with armed forces. They may not be bearing arms, but still aid armed forces or groups. This makes it hard to distinguish who is a civilian and who is not. Civilians are often compelled to align themselves with one side or another for their own safety. The presence of UCP teams opens a space for civilians to assume a more non-aligned position. As partners of an unarmed, nonpartisan, independent, and civilian protection agency, civil society organizations can send a clear message that they are not affiliated with either side in the conflict.

14 While UCP organizations are civilian led, some military operations do adapt UCP methodology e.g. the Australian army in Bougainville.