
INTRODUCTION

Unarmed strategies must be at the forefront of UN efforts to protect civilians. Humanitarian organizations play essential roles in protecting civilians. Where appropriate, timely coordination between missions with humanitarian actors is indispensable in pursuing unarmed strategies as these partners often work closely with communities, especially internally displaced persons. Many non-governmental organizations, national and international, also ensure protection by their civilian presence and commitment to non-violent strategies for protection. Missions should make every effort to harness or leverage the non-violent practices and capabilities of local communities and non-governmental organizations to support the creation of a protective environment.

With respect to protecting civilians, the Panel recommends that: In view of the positive contributions of unarmed civilian protection actors, missions should work more closely with local communities and national and international nongovernmental organizations in building a protective environment.

*High-Level Independent Review Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,
16 June 2015*

Today, an estimated 2 billion people live in fragile and conflict-affected areas of the world, where they are extremely vulnerable to the impact of violence and disasters. This number is projected to increase, as the population in these areas is growing twice as fast as the rest of the world (UNOCHA, 2019). These locations are also most often vulnerable to the havoc wreaked by climate chaos. In these areas, civilians are faced with a wide variety of abuses and human rights violations, including killings, torture, sexual abuse, and forced displacement. In many situations children are abducted or recruited into

armed forces; women trafficked for sexual exploitation; and human rights defenders¹ imprisoned or killed. Even humanitarian aid workers, delivering aid to survivors of war, are not free from intentional (or targeted) attacks. Recognizing the overwhelming need, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has insisted that ‘human protection is a defining purpose of the United Nations in the twenty-first century’ (Ki-Moon, 2012).

Since 1999 UN peace operations have assisted states recovering from war to protect civilians. However, there are many situations of war and violent conflict where UN peace operations cannot be deployed or are ineffective and where government actors are not willing or able to provide protection to some or all civilians. The international community has struggled, in theory and in practice, with the question of its responsibility to protect (R2P) civilians within the territory of sovereign states. While still the subject of debates and reports, R2P has not been implemented since the 2011 NATO-led intervention in Libya. In addition, the scale and complexity of protection challenges in the Balkans, Rwanda, Darfur, Libya, and Syria have demonstrated that threats to civilians are complex and dynamic: no single international actor is capable of mitigating them without significant support from other institutions (O’Callaghan, 2007).

The international community has begun to recognize that humanitarian organizations and civil society groups have played and are playing a long-established and often critical role in seeking to address large unmet protection needs. A small number of these organizations and groups focuses specifically on providing direct physical protection to civilians – an area of work that conventionally has been covered by the military and police, and of course by UN peacekeepers² wherever peace operations are deployed. When unarmed non-governmental or civil society groups provide protection to civilians we call this Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP), which is the focus of this course.³ UCP is the practice of civilians protecting other civilians in situations of imminent, ongoing, or recent violent conflict. It involves international civilians protecting local civilians, local civilians protecting each other, and even local civilians protecting international or non-local civilians. The practice of UCP is nonviolent and generally nonpartisan. Protection is provided on invitation from local actors. It supports local actors as they work to address the roots and consequences of violent conflict. This practice is grounded in international law, in the principle of civilian immunity in war, and in the protection afforded by international conventions (these sources are elaborated in Module 2).

More specifically, UCP is a strategic mix of key nonviolent engagement methods, principles, values, and skills. Specially trained civilians, in close coordination with local

1 Human rights defenders act to promote or protect human rights, including civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. Particular issues of concern in areas of violent conflict are executions, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, discrimination, forced evictions and access to health care. Human rights defenders also investigate and report on human rights violations and abuse. They accompany survivors of human rights violations, take action to end impunity, support better governance, contribute to the implementation of human rights treaties, and provide human rights education.

2 Many other humanitarian organizations and civil society groups focus on different areas of protection, for example by providing basic necessities to survivors of violence or advocating for the protection of social and cultural rights.

3 Scholars and practitioners have used other terms for this practice, including Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping, Proactive Presence, Proactive Engagement, and Protective Accompaniment

actors, apply UCP to prevent violence, provide direct physical protection to civilians under threat, and strengthen local peace infrastructures. Practitioners of Unarmed Civilian Protection engage with affected individuals and communities at the grassroots level for extended periods of time. They provide, for example, protective presence for civilians who are about to flee their homes. This physical presence, close to where threatened and vulnerable people live, may be provided twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for several weeks or even months. UCP practitioners can also employ a range of other methods, such as monitoring ceasefires, accompaniment, rumour control, and capacity enhancement⁴ for civilian protection. UCP is applicable at various stages of a conflict; during early stages to prevent violence, during crisis situations to stop violence or de-escalate tensions, and at later stages to help sustain peace agreements and create a safer space for peacebuilding efforts.

It is estimated that 'between 1500 BCE and 1860 CE there were in the known world an average of thirteen years of war to every year of peace'. In that whole period of well over 3000 years 'more than 8000 peace treaties were concluded—each one of them meant to remain in force forever. On average they only lasted two years!' (Stevens, 1989) One obvious conclusion is that peace treaties don't guarantee peace—because they often don't resolve conflicts nor do they address the underlying causes: 'post-war' is not the same as 'post-conflict'. At best, peace treaties provide a brief interlude without violent action, to give the conflict parties a chance to get down to the tough task of peacebuilding, to address the deeper reasons for the war, and to get the peace right. (Carriere, 2011).

UCP practitioners operate in a variety of conflict situations⁵, including places where UN or other regional and international organizations are currently not present. The entry of UCP teams into these places can be easier than the entry of armed or more formal protection actors, as they do not require an internationally agreed mandate. UCP supports peace infrastructures at the sub-national and grassroots level, which is where ceasefires often unravel, leading to the spread of violence and relapse into war. These peace infrastructures include Early Warning Early Response systems, weapon-free zones, and women protection teams. UCP attributes a special role to women as peacemakers and peacebuilders. It plays a role in accompanying bottom-up peacemaking efforts. In the process, UCP strengthens peace infrastructures at lower levels and connects them with actors at higher levels.

UCP practitioners also operate alongside and collaborate with UN peacekeepers (military, police, and civilians) and humanitarian organizations, with job descriptions

4 Capacity is the ability of individuals, institutions, and broader systems to perform their functions effectively, efficiently and achieve their development objectives in a sustainable way. Capacity development is a long process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time.

5 The World Development Report 2011 recognizes multiple forms of violence: (1) local intergroup conflict; (2) “conventional” political conflict (contests for state power or for autonomy or independence); (3) widespread gang-related violence; (4) organized crime or trafficking with accompanying violence; and (5) local conflicts with transnational ideological connections (Chapter 1, Table 1.1). This course will focus on the first two forms of violence and also the fifth: forms for which UCP offers approaches that have proven effective.

that partly overlap and partly differ. In places where UN peacekeepers operate, UCP practitioners, while never accepting force protection, may have complementary roles, for example in strengthening community-based protection capacities. Furthermore, they could play a role in accompanying or supporting mediation processes (e.g., by the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs or the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue) through on-going engagement with conflict parties at the local level. In this context, UCP practitioners may play an important role in identifying and addressing protection needs of particularly targeted groups, such as human rights defenders. Moreover, while communities in affected areas may rely on armed protection against large-scale attacks, they may find it easier to approach UCP team members (who live in their midst) to meet their needs for individual protection.

‘Unarmed’ does not mean ‘without influence’ or ‘defenceless’ (Carriere, 2011). There are many ways to deter violence. In most situations of violent conflict there are points of leverage that unarmed civilians can use. Whether using the ‘soft power’ of encouragement or the threat of consequences such as loss of reputation, unwanted consequences or loss of support as deterrence, civilians can at times deter violence. The nonviolent approach to protection and keeping the peace also supports the transition from a culture of violence to a culture of peace and nonviolence. It shows (or reminds) affected communities that it is often (but not always) possible to reduce violence without the use of weapons or reliance on armed force. Moreover, it enables communities to participate actively in the process of peace and security and to shape their own destiny.

A key objective of UCP is strengthening the capacities of civilians to protect other civilians. As stated by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, strong civilian capacities are considered to be essential in the transition from war to sustainable peace.⁶ Guéhenno went on to say that even countries devastated by conflict possess some of the needed capacities for peace, but that international actors often focus on what they themselves can provide, rather than listening to the real needs and capacities of those whom they serve. These observations lie at the heart of UCP.

UCP uses a bottom-up approach to protection and keeping peace. It starts by listening to the protection needs of civilians and identifying local capacities for peace. It then works to protect and nurture these existing capacities, strengthening them in areas where local actors require assistance. Above all it aims to strengthen local civilian capacities to protect civilians from violence, so that local actors can take ownership of UCP. The capacity enhancement process is not limited to stand-alone training courses. It is illustrated and supported by the visible day-to-day practice of UCP practitioners in the area. This allows local actors to assess the applicability of UCP in their own context. More importantly, it allows them to be involved in day-to-day practice, fuse it with existing local (UCP) practices, or hone new skills until they feel confident to apply them. UCP requires ongoing and deep engagement with local communities to determine what are the most appropriate approaches and combination of methods which shift, sometimes quickly, as conflict conditions change. Thus UCP is a systems approach to protection, defining a process more than a prescription of methods.

6 Addressing the Advisory Group to the UN Secretary General on Civilian Capacities in the Aftermath of Conflict, 2011

Overall Goal

This publication aims to make a contribution to the common objectives of protecting civilians and enhancing nonviolent responses to violent conflict. More specifically, it offers an introduction to the foundations and practices of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP), its principles, sources of guidance, methods and required skills as well as offering an overview of UCP in practice. Although people have been protecting themselves nonviolently for thousands of years and the idea of unarmed civilian protection as a particular practice has been around for almost a century, it is only in its more recent manifestation that UCP has begun to receive serious attention in UN and donor circles as well as from the leadership of organizations and governments operating in settings of violent conflicts.

Audience

This manual is intended to provide an introduction to UCP for people whose work includes or is solely focused on the nonviolent protection of civilians. It includes leadership and staff of aid agencies and civil society organizations working in conflict situations (at different levels and in different capacities) and interested in strengthening their capacities to protect the people they serve as well as their own staff. This second edition of the manual increasingly focuses on UCP as practiced by local civil society, individuals and groups of people, who are interested in protecting themselves and others in their own environment. Though self-protection is not the main focus of this manual, there is much here for people so engaged. The manual also addresses a broader audience including university students, journalists, and civilian, military, and police personnel working in conflict and post-conflict environments (as part of a UN or non-UN operation) interested in gaining an appreciation of UCP principles, practices, methods, and required competencies. Some modules may be of interest to staff of donor agencies, policy makers and diplomats searching for effective and affordable ways to prevent violence and protect civilians.

Content and Learning Objectives

This manual is designed as reference point and aid to online facilitators and face-to-face trainers. It contains summaries of key messages, recommendations for further study (reading, viewing and listening), bibliographies, and some appendices, including a glossary of terms. At the end of the manual, readers will be able to:

- Describe the key definitions, principles, objectives and sources of guidance for UCP;
- Demonstrate an understanding of UCP methods by selecting them for application to a variety of conflict scenarios;
- Analyse a conflict scenario and devise a plan for identifying and assessing the needs

- of specific at-risk populations;
- Identify key features of an effective UCP implementation plan and exit strategy, with a view toward maximizing the security both of UCP staff and local civilians.

The manual is composed of five modules.

MODULE 1 | INTRODUCTION TO UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION

The module introduces the concept of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) by presenting some of its fundamental principles and rationale, defining relevant terms, and by placing it within the history of nonviolence and peacekeeping – two traditions from which it is born. The module concludes by presenting some of the main actors who practice or support UCP and related activities.

MODULE 2 | UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION: OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES OF GUIDANCE

The module dives into the core of Unarmed Civilian Protection by exploring its key objectives, principles, and sources of guidance. By expanding on these, you will acquire a deeper understanding of UCP, how it functions, its use of encouragement and deterrence, and how it is placed within the greater frame of humanitarian intervention.

MODULE 3 | UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION: KEY METHODS

The module introduces and describes UCP methods and related competencies. It then discusses how, when and where these methods and skills are used. Practical case studies illustrate different strategic applications of methods in a conflict context.

MODULE 4 | UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION IN PRACTICE: KEY COMPETENCIES NEEDED WHEN ENTERING THE COMMUNITY

The module describes the first steps UCP agencies take in preparing to enter and when entering the community. It begins with a description of the core competencies of UCP practitioners, that guide the recruitment, training, and deployment process. It then moves into the issue of conflict analysis, which supports UCP teams in understanding conflict dynamics, and lays the foundation for strategic planning. The section on conflict analysis is followed by a description of different types and stages of conflict.

MODULE 5 | UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION IN PRACTICE: LIVING IN AND EXITING THE COMMUNITY

After describing the final components of the UCP programming cycle, the module presents a case study from South Sudan that brings the learning from all five modules together. This case study is used to show how the different components of the UCP programming cycle described in Modules 4 and 5 and the UCP methods described in Module 3, can be applied in a particular situation of violent conflict. The module concludes with a number of key dilemmas that UCP practitioners may experience throughout the UCP programming cycle.

ICON LEGEND



Assignment



Summary of Key Messages



Case Study



Recommended Resources for Further Study



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Acoguate Photo / Presence at march for peace, Huehuetenango, Guatemala / 2019