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

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OVERVIEW AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Intensive preparation is required before Unarmed Civilian Protection practitioners can provide protective accompaniment, monitor ceasefires, or in the case of non-local actors, even enter an area of conflict. Certain conflict situations may not be suitable for UCP, affected communities may not need or want any assistance from UCP practitioners, and people most affected by violence may prioritize other needs over protection needs. Even if a specific situation appears to be suitable for UCP, affected communities *do* request assistance, and vulnerable people *do* prioritize protection needs, UCP agencies cannot just move into an area and start working. They need to recruit and train the right people, raise funds, thoroughly analyse the conflict, and assess if UCP can effectively address the needs of affected populations.

Module 4 describes the first steps external UCP agencies take in preparing to enter and when entering the community. Local organizations that apply UCP may engage in some of these processes in either more formal or informal ways. It begins with a description of the core competencies of UCP practitioners, which guide the recruitment, training, and deployment process. It then moves to 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. This is an important part of conflict analysis because UCP practitioners tailor their strategies, methods, and applications to the types and stages of a particular conflict. The module concludes with a description of a UCP needs assessment process, the different types of populations that UCP agencies most frequently protect, and how they address their needs.

BOX 1 | LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module participants will be able to:

- Describe the core competencies of a UCP practitioner
- Describe how conflict is analyzed within UCP
- Describe how UCP is applied in different types and stages of conflict
- Describe how violent conflict impacts various vulnerable populations and their particular protection needs
and how UCP addresses these



Summary of Key Messages

- Key skills of UCP practitioners include listening, engaging in dialogue, analysing conflicts, managing information, facilitating, and negotiating. Key knowledge of UCP includes UCP theory, security protocols, the political situation, and local customs. Key characteristics of UCP practitioners include resilience, intercultural competence, courage, and empathy.
- Conflict analysis is a tool that helps UCP teams to understand a particular conflict, in order to design appropriate protection strategies. Misinterpretation of the conflict may not only lead to ineffective or inappropriate programming, but also risks endangering UCP personnel and local actors.
- UCP has been conducted in various types of conflict situations, including horizontal and vertical conflicts, inter-state and intra-state conflicts, and conflicts over natural resources, political power, ethnic identity, and self-determination. UCP practitioners tailor their methods to the different types of conflict.
- Complex as conflicts may be, they generally pass through well-recognized stages. Recognizing these stages can help UCP teams at the field level to better understand conflict dynamics and developments, formulate appropriate scenarios, and develop timely responses.
- A needs assessment is a systematic process for determining and addressing gaps between current conditions and desired conditions. It allows UCP teams to assess if there are vulnerable populations that need to be protected from violence and if affected communities will accept UCP personnel to live and work in the area.
- Vulnerable groups include children, women, displaced people, and human rights defenders. UCP practitioners aim to decrease the vulnerability of these groups, increase their capacity to respond to and diminish threats. Most of all they encourage vulnerable populations to find their own strengths and become actors in their own protection.

4.1

Core competencies of UCP practitioners

At the beginning of module 1 it was mentioned that UCP, when implemented by international organizations, is applied by specially trained and organized civilians. Module 1 then presented a number of key skills that these civilians use to apply different methods and principles. This section takes a closer look at the key skills of UCP as well as key knowledge and key personal qualities. These three areas constitute the core competencies of UCP practitioners. They are central to the recruitment and training of UCP personnel as well as to the composition of UCP field teams. Individual UCP team members may not possess all of the key skills, knowledge, and personal qualities at the time of their recruitment or even after an initial mission-preparedness training. However, teams are usually composed in such ways that the weakness of one individual in a specific area is compensated by the strength of a fellow team member in that same area.¹

4.1.1 Key skills

Key skills of UCP include, but are not limited to the following:

- Listening
- Collecting and managing information
- Building relationships with actors involved in a conflict
- Facilitating
- Negotiating
- Analysing conflict and context

Some projects require specific language skills, so that UCP personnel are able to communicate directly with local actors and beneficiaries, while other projects rely on national staff members or translators. Still others take place in an organization's home

¹ Various UCP theorists and practitioners have also stressed the importance of diversity in age, sex, ethnicity, race, class, nationality, and religion in the composition of UCP field teams. Particular identities may or may not be suitable for a particular violent conflict (Schirch, 2006, p.53-54). Many UCP organizations recognize they are using power and privilege rooted in racism and neo-colonialism that values some people over others, but say they try to do this consciously to protect people while looking for ways to break them down at the same time. See https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/Good_Practices/Paynesville_2019-10_final.pdf

country or practitioners' own community.

LISTENING

UCP practitioners may be skilled in initiating dialogue, but in order to generate acceptance and gain the trust of all parties they must be able to listen actively. Authentic presence comes through deep listening to oneself and others, quietly leaning into uncomfortable moments of silence or turmoil, and letting go of the impulse to fix things. Local actors may appear hostile, articulate violent ideas, or present strategies that are at odds with international law. Fellow team members as well as local and international partner organizations may have different ideas on how to approach difficult actors or implement programmes. If UCP practitioners are to reduce tensions and create safer space—a more conducive context for local actors to resolve their differences—they must be able to go beyond providing the opportunity for people to say what they want. They must be able to listen for the interests, needs, and fears that lie beneath the spoken words.

COLLECTING AND MANAGING INFORMATION

Though many UCP practitioners imagine themselves to spend most of their time providing accompaniment to threatened civilians or patrolling unsafe areas, in reality they spend as much time—sometimes more—in managing information. In order to provide effective protection to civilians in the right place, at the right time, they have to gather, process, and share a lot of information. They have to gather information about protection needs, security risks, rumours, armed actors in the area, and road conditions, among many other issues. They have to decide what information is reliable and most urgent, what information should be shared, how it should be shared, and with whom it should be shared. They also have to establish or contribute to information systems that can store data for necessary analysis while at the same time maintain security. Finally, they need to productively participate in the ongoing team meetings and processes for sharing and analysing information.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ACTORS INVOLVED IN A CONFLICT

I went to their house. There were maybe 13 guys and 15 guns. I took off my shirt, we ordered pizza. We talked for about four hours...Now, whenever I see them, they'll pull up their shirts, and be like, 'Hey, we don't got no guns! We're about to go play basketball.'...Our job is to connect and build relationships, whether they're the person being shot or the person doing the shooting...At the end of the day, they're both victims of something.

Sam Castro, Nonviolence Chicago (Graceffo, 2020)

Building relationships with as many different actors as is desirable and possible in a situation of violent conflict lies at the core of UCP theory and practice. Therefore, individual UCP practitioners need to be able to engage in dialogue with a wide variety of

actors, including men, women, children, survivors of violence, perpetrators of violence, high-level government officials, military commanders, and grassroots community leaders. The initial relationships are often built with those who have requested protection and those who are assessed as being at high-risk. While it may seem easy, these are actually complicated relationships. If the organization is from outside the community, it is critical to quickly meet with people from different parts of the community, so as not to be seen as allied with only one sector. Even when the focus of UCP activities is on protecting a specific person or organization, it is important to meet with key people such as the chief of police or a battalion commander in the area, to let them know of the intervention, its purpose and limitations, etc. Relationships with actors who are known for or suspected of committing violence against civilians will be used to encourage respect for civilians' human rights and also to deter threatened violence. As such, these relationships often have elements both of cooperation and of coercion. Other skills such as listening, facilitating, and negotiation are useful in building relationships.

Given the challenges, practitioners are trained to tailor their communication strategies, messages, and vocabulary to different audiences. A large part of UCP mission preparedness trainings is dedicated to honing conversational skills, often by exposing newly recruited UCP practitioners to a series of role-plays in which they have to interact with some of the above-mentioned actors. Among the 750 local ceasefire monitors in Myanmar trained by Nonviolent Peaceforce between 2014 and 2018, role plays about meeting authorities were consistently mentioned as the most useful part of their training.

Before the training, we did not know how to engage actors, especially like the Myanmar Army and the Kachin Independence Organization. But the training from NP [Nonviolent Peaceforce] helped us learn the ways to engage them and build our confidence. It is because of the skills and confidence we got from the trainings; we can now intervene and respond to cases of violence in our communities.

*Township Coordinator of civilian ceasefire monitoring network in Myanmar
(2016)*

Another important consideration is maintaining relationships once they are initiated. A relationship that starts out appearing to be cooperative may become fragile based on rumours, UCP activities, or other real or perceived threats to the relationship. As practitioner safety heavily depends on these relationships, maintaining contact and at least a level of cooperation is critical.

There are many challenges to building and maintaining relationships. As discussed in the previous module, in some contexts it is not desirable to be in close contact with certain actors, as doing so would undermine the trust of those being protected. In others, certain actors have been declared terrorists or in other ways 'off-limits'. In some places some actors will refuse to meet at all or more than once. The beliefs and preferences of UCP practitioners can also overtly or subtly influence which relationships are cultivated and how they are maintained. UCP practitioners may dislike certain actors, seeing them as responsible for some (or all) of the violence. This can adversely influence efforts to maintain relationships unless carefully monitored and discussed in the team.

FACILITATING

As nonpartisan third parties that give primacy to local actors, UCP personnel often take on a facilitating role. Facilitation is not limited to specific meetings or events. It also involves facilitating longer-term processes. Whether they provide shuttle diplomacy, create space for local negotiations, build the capacity of local peacemakers, or build relationships among communities and protection actors, UCP actors try to make sure that peace and security processes are owned and driven by local actors, even if these actors urge non-local team members to assume a leadership role. At the same time, UCP practitioners need to make sure that the process towards peace and security moves ahead, despite the high levels of mistrust and conflict that may exist between different parties. Therefore, they need to be firm and decisive in creating space for the process to unfold without getting personally involved in the content and decision-making. This is a balancing act that requires strong facilitation skills. The facilitation of processes may involve a wide range of activities, some of which appear rather commonplace but are essential to move these processes forward. It may involve driving a village leader to an important meeting or making sure that the decisions of a community security meeting are recorded and shared. Lack of time, communication challenges, power dynamics, and personal conflicts can all become bottlenecks that prevent important processes from moving forward.

NEGOTIATING

While UCP personnel are not normally part of high-level negotiations, they often find themselves in situations that require negotiations. Civilians that they accompany may be arrested, soldiers at a checkpoint may refuse to let them pass despite official clearance, or government officials may suddenly refuse to give them permission to enter a specific conflict area. Excellent negotiation skills may well result in the release of the arrested civilians, a passage through that checkpoint, or the permission to start operations in that conflict area after all.

ANALYZING CONFLICT AND CONTEXT

Effective information management requires analysis skills. Most conflict situations are highly complex and dynamic. Ethnicity, economy, geography, class, gender, religion, and lifestyle may all be part of a web of causes or conditions that fuel a particular conflict or are used to divide and rule. Underlying many conflicts that appear to be about identity, land, or other markers, is often a struggle over power. Particular causes are used to mobilize people. Collective or individual traumas (conscious or unconscious) may further complicate the situation. Addressing one issue at the expense of another issue or not being aware of recent changes and underlying power dynamics may cause unexpected outcomes and worsen the situation. In order to navigate through this web of conflict dynamics, ongoing and in-depth conflict and context analysis is required. More information about conflict analysis will be provided later in this module, while context analysis will be addressed in module 5.

In certain situations, such as before, during and after elections, the threat of violence is especially high and more accompaniment may be needed. The

same is true after HRDs [Human Rights Defenders] have published reports or have returned from an international speaking tour, and when courts deal with political cases.

Schweitzer, Good Practices in Unarmed Civilian Protection and Protective Accompaniment, Bogota (2020)

4.1.2

Key knowledge

In order to start working for a UCP implementing agency in a particular context, UCP practitioners are encouraged or required to have knowledge about some or all of the following:

- The objectives and key principles of the implementing agency
- UCP values, methods, and skills
- The local context (i.e., conflict, political situation, security situation, history)
- Local customs and religious and cultural practices
- Roles of various actors in the protection of civilians
- Security protocols of the implementing agency
- Conflict and context analysis theory or tools
- Key sources of guidance (e.g., International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law)
- Key lessons from the field

Implementing agencies may consider candidates' initial knowledge on these topics when recruiting suitable team members and then plan to supplement this knowledge in mission preparedness training and in the field.

4.1.3

Key personal qualities

UCP work has an important personal dimension. With relationships at the core of UCP methods and without weapons or material aid 'to hide behind', the personal qualities of individual UCP practitioners are a fundamental tool in the application of UCP. Despite intensive preparation, UCP practitioners may be confronted with difficult situations, which can be demanding in a personal way. UCP is not a job that one leaves behind at the end of the day or at the weekend. UCP personnel need to be alert and prepared at all times to respond to emergency situations. Their behaviour will be closely watched by those who live and work in the local communities where they serve, and in some cases by a broader national or international community. Skills and knowledge are often rated

higher than personal qualities, but within the context of UCP, it is often the personal qualities that make a practitioner most effective. Though they are more difficult to acquire than knowledge and skills, these qualities too can be trained and developed. Field work is usually the best teacher of personal qualities. Few if any practitioners have developed all of these qualities, but all have developed some.

Key personal qualities include:

- Resilience
- Intercultural competence
- Proactivity, taking initiative
- Resourcefulness
- Courage
- Empathy
- Creativity
- Humility
- Discipline
- Flexibility
- Maturity
- Equanimity

In this section, four personal qualities are described in more detail: resilience, intercultural competence, courage, and empathy.

RESILIENCE²

UCP requires a lot of resilience, elasticity, and quick recovery from adversity both physical and emotional. Individual UCP practitioners often mentally prepare themselves to face violence and destruction, but on the ground mundane obstacles tend to be the biggest challenge. Away from home and their usual comforts, they often live and work together with fellow UCP team members from different cultures in isolated areas, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. They will work with others who have differing approaches to work and understandings of gender roles. In rural areas UCP personnel may even live in tents or other minimal accommodations with little space for privacy. Curfews may apply in areas of insecurity. Visitors may appear at the most irregular times, making a range of requests that UCP teams are not able to address. Well-designed action plans may have to be abandoned as current developments abruptly change priorities. Sudden crisis situations may require UCP personnel to work day and night for days on end. The opposite situation is equally possible: an area that has been subjected to extreme violence all of a sudden remains calm and stable for a very long time. This can lead UCP practitioners to question the purpose of their ongoing presence.

Though for many UCP practitioners their time in the field is the experience of a lifetime, it always takes deep resilience to face the above-mentioned circumstances and

2 See UNITAR e-learning course *Confronting Trauma: A Primer for Global Action* (the first course in this series is especially aimed at peace operations personnel and humanitarian aid workers). <http://www.unitar.org/ptp/>

to maintain morale, equanimity, and motivation. Individual UCP practitioners have different techniques for maintaining morale and building resilience. They may:

- Ensure rest and relaxation, including taking regular leave, as well as regular exercise.
- Re-establish focus on key priorities: violence prevention and protection of threatened civilians;
- Remind themselves of the reasons they joined UCP;
- Celebrate successes, even when they may seem insignificant;
- Maintain a spiritual practice such as prayer or meditation;
- Obtain trauma counselling;
- Ask for help;
- Forgive oneself and others often;
- Build team relations and maintain communication (share concerns);
- Make use of individual talents and skills within a team: synergize energies;

Organizations may also have their plans to strengthen the resilience of its teams and staff, including Rest and Recuperation, sexual harassment policies, good working practices meetings, staff retreats, etc. Some organizations ask practitioners to develop their own personal resilience plan as they start to work.

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Intercultural competence is a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interactions in a variety of cultural contexts (Bennett 2008). It enables people to perform their duties outside their own national and organizational culture, no matter what their educational or ethnic background, or what functional area their job description represents, or what organization they come from.

In the context of UCP, intercultural competence is important because the effectiveness of UCP depends on acceptance by local actors. UCP strategies and methods may be appropriate to the context, but if the behaviour of individual UCP practitioners is inappropriate, local actors may be reluctant to accept UCP. Recurring issues include sexual relations with local people or public displays of intimacy between staff; wearing revealing or locally inappropriate clothes; display of luxury lifestyles; and use of gestures, gender roles, language, or actions that offend religious or cultural beliefs and practices. In some cases inappropriate behaviour of individual UCP team members is simply unprofessional or mildly offensive. It may not have any severe negative consequences. In other cases however, culturally inappropriate behaviour has the potential to endanger the individual UCP, fellow team members, or even local actors.

Intercultural competence is also critical within the UCP team itself. Often UCP team members coming from a variety of cultures find themselves working closely together in unfamiliar environs, relying on second or third languages and under great stress. This can lead to misunderstanding and conflict over matters such as differing views on gender roles.

Intercultural competence is not about right and wrong behaviour. It is not just about

what not to do. It is the ability to know—or to inquire at appropriate times—what is considered appropriate in a specific context and act upon it. UCP practitioners are expected to make an effort to ensure the appropriateness of their behaviour for the sake of the civilians they are trying to protect. This could mean that they have to refrain from certain behaviour that is considered appropriate in their own culture. This does not mean giving up who they are but rather growing or expanding their capacities. The display of cultural differences is also an opportunity for local actors to learn and to exercise tolerance, but UCP practitioners should generally respect local customs to the extent that they do not contradict the core objectives of preventing violence and increasing security (see dilemmas in Module 5 for more on this).

Intercultural competence is more than learning the do's and don'ts. It also includes less obvious differences, for example, differences in decision-making styles or communication styles. As relationships are key within a team, knowing when to listen, when to leave space for others to speak, or when to push yourself to speak up if you tend to be quiet, are important qualities to cultivate. Of specific relevance to UCP situations are values such as dealing with authority:

- Acknowledging the authority of others, and recognizing that authority may come from sources that you yourself may not consider legitimate (e.g. the elders of the community, or faith healers);
- Choosing not to react to or defend against a certain level of intimidation or bullying, if necessary, and knowing how to reconcile yourself to that;
- Assuming an authoritative role even though your personal preferred leadership style is participatory or even consensus-based. In fact, different leadership styles must be pragmatically adopted, depending on many circumstances.

Specific intercultural skills include:

- Suspending assumptions and value judgments;
- Enhancing perception skills;
- Practicing cultural humility;
- Increasing tolerance for ambiguity;
- Listening;
- Recognizing multiple perspectives;
- Developing multiple interpretations;
- Learning to use multiple communication styles;
- Meeting people where they are, rather than expecting them to meet you in your ways of doing things.

COURAGE

Courage is the ability and willingness to confront fear, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation. It is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear. Physical courage is courage in the face of physical pain, hardship, or death. Moral courage, on the other hand, is the ability to act rightly in the face of popular opposition, shame, scandal, personal impulse, discouragement, or exhaustion. Moral courage expresses itself in values-driven action, moving in alignment

with our highest humanitarian aspirations and our deepest sense of who we want to be. Physical courage and moral courage are both ideal characteristics needed in UCP, though moral courage is most important. While courage is the ideal, wisdom in knowing when the threat is too great is critical. As with all personal qualities, UCP practitioners vary in the degree to which courage is developed.

UCP actors may find themselves in situations that are frightening, though not as frequently as people often imagine. Assaults, intimidation, and attacks on UCP personnel have happened, but serious incidents have been rare. UCP teams continually make risk assessments to prevent situations of sudden danger, and personnel will be evacuated from the area if risks are deemed too high. Of course, unexpected things may occur and therefore UCP practitioners have to be prepared to face their fears. Though fear is not a pleasant sensation, it is a natural and essential survival response. Fear can be debilitating, but it can be managed in the same way that stress is managed. At the same time, courage can be developed with practice.

One way to develop courage is to believe that, by acting, you can have a positive impact. For many people, the most powerful courage enabler is the recognition of what is truly at stake. Another way to develop courage is to know that inaction is untenable. By believing that the alternative is unbearable, people find the courage to act in desperate conditions and against overwhelming odds. Courage is something that people need to develop in order to act courageously. At the same time, people learn to be courageous by doing courageous acts. Fortunately, acting courageously can be practiced in pre-deployment trainings through low-stakes role-playing exercises that simulate dangerous situations. These kinds of simulations may not be an accurate representation of reality, but they are designed to be as close as can reasonably be achieved. Moreover, it gives people a safe space to experiment with different responses to dangerous situations.

When fear overwhelms courage, there are ways to manage fears. Techniques to manage fear include:

- **Breathing:** focus on the breath, slowing down the breath, counting the breath;
- **Communication:** eye contact, reassuring others, humour, sharing the fact that you are scared;
- **Touch:** clasping your own or someone else's hands, holding an object;
- **Grounding:** touching the ground or earth, holding onto a tree, a leaf, something alive or natural;
- **Body:** washing your face, quick body shake, vigorous exercise, a quick run, stretching;
- **Visualization:** closing eyes and visualizing an image of a safe place;
- **Voice:** humming or singing a song softly;
- **Prayer:** connecting to a higher power;
- **Meditation:** meditation, calming and centring techniques (Pt'chang Nonviolent Community Safety Group Inc. 2005).

EMPATHY

In a genuine relationship, there is an outward flow of open, alert attention

toward the other person in which there is no wanting whatsoever. That alert attention is presence. It is the prerequisite of any authentic relationship.

Eckhart Tolle, A New Earth (2005, p.84)

The core of empathy is to understand another's feelings and the source of those feelings. Empathy involves verifying that one has understood correctly. As the opposite of apathy or indifference, empathy emphasizes the ability to identify oneself with the suffering or the happiness of others and respond to the emotions of others, especially to alleviate their distress. Four steps can be identified in the process of expressing empathy: taking perspective, staying out of judgment, recognizing other people's emotions, and communicating our understanding of other people's emotions (Wiseman 1996). Like courage, empathy can be developed.

Empathy is a very important characteristic of UCP. The entire UCP system is in some way built around developing positive relationships with multiple actors for multiple purposes. In dealing with survivors of violence or natural disasters there is a natural impulse to make things better, to say or do the right thing. However, rarely can a prescribed response make something better. What makes things better is a sense of connection between a UCP actor and those they work with (Brown n.d.). This requires empathy or true presence—not merely physical presence, but presence of body, mind and spirit. Through connection, survivors of violence will feel understood and listened to, and as a result they will be more likely to share their stories.

Everyone was so busy reacting to my situation that nobody was there with me.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross on her experience with metastatic cancer, Ram Dass, Be love Now (2001, p. 180)

Empathy should not be limited to victims and the oppressed. It should be used in all interactions, including or perhaps especially in the interactions with actors who are more difficult to reach. An army commander who does not seem to have a lot of empathy for UCP methods may be more open to engagement if UCP practitioners make an effort to imagine themselves in his situation. They may try to let him know that they understand the concerns he may have over the safety of UCP teams in an area under his command. Sometimes a simple question about a photo of a child on a commander's desk will do more to build a working relationship than a concise list of programme outcomes will.

When UCP practitioners act in empathic ways, it can make a big difference in interactions with perpetrators of violence. To use the words of Pablo Casals: "Each person has inside a basic decency and goodness. If he listens to it and acts on it, he is giving a great deal of what it is the world needs most. It is not complicated but it takes courage. It takes courage for a person to listen to his own goodness and act on it." When UCP practitioners build relationships with perpetrators, they need to step into their shoes and listen for the pain, frustration and fear that may lie behind the apparent indifference or hatred, even if they disagree with the behaviour; then there is a real chance that violence can be prevented. Many perpetrators have been abused, traumatized, and abandoned, and feel trapped, often not seeing other options than to repeat the pattern of abuse. Empathy may not

be what they expect, but it may be what they need most. It has the power to disarm an aggressor.

STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN SKILLS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

Experienced UCP practitioners strike a natural balance between hard skills (e.g. conflict analysis or information management skills) and soft skills or personal qualities (e.g. patience, empathy or creativity). They also integrate qualities associated with the right and the left side of the brain or the heart, with yin and yang, respectively. On the one hand they resort to qualities such as courage and assertiveness by approaching threats of violence against civilians head-on and engaging directly with perpetrators. They rely on logical thinking to assess risks of entering into hostile areas and are meticulous in their analysis of early warning signs around them (yang). At the same time, they are not afraid to embrace qualities such as softening to disarm aggressors or opening up to verbal abuse, in order to redirect aggression away from more vulnerable civilians. Aware of their own potential for violence, they may make a connection with the potential for peace in abusers, using the affront as an opportunity to draw them into the peace process, assess their needs and fears, and transform them into allies (yin). See figure 1 for further examples.

There is an important gender dimension to this discourse. In patriarchal societies, so called left-brain qualities as assertiveness, action, and logical thinking are often valued and nurtured more in men and used as the building blocks for systems and structures that govern these societies. Right-brain qualities such as creativity, softness, and compassion are more valued in women. They tend to have peripheral value within governing systems and are easily dismissed as weak or irrelevant. The celebration of left-brain qualities and masculinity is particularly strong within the security sector. In the absence of their counterbalancing right brain qualities, left-brain qualities tend to become ossified or become toxic versions of themselves, laying the foundation for a culture of violence. Certainty turns into rigidity, assertiveness into forcing, and initiating into dominating. The notion that security can be obtained through empathy or by bringing people together is beyond imagination within such a paradigm. But it is exactly what UCP actors set out to do. They do not dismiss hardness and are firm in their rejection of all forms of violence. At the same time, they know when to be soft and empathetic, relying on their intuition in the midst of turmoil and quietly creating space for local actors to lead. The less UCP actors are locked into designated gender roles the easier it is for them and their teams to realize their full potential and draw on the widest possible scope of personal qualities in order to protect civilians.

Relentless pro-activity to find entry points for protection	Active	Quiet	Quiet presence; creating space for local actors to lead
Continuous observation of context to maintain safety and security	Extrospection	Introspection	Strategic use of one's own power and privilege to protect others
Moving towards threats and engaging with abusers head on	Valor	Compassion	Seeing the humanity in abusers and transforming them into allies
Not letting oneself be intimidated or side-tracked by those in power	Assertive	Yielding	Opening up to intimidation to move aggression away from others
Knocking on doors that appear firmly shut (try again, fail better)	Initiating	Nurturing	Building confidence among the vulnerable to protect themselves
Understanding tactics and pressure points of perpetrators	Logical	Intuitive	Listening to the 'heart's core' in the midst of crisis and confusion
Impeccable ethical conduct to maintain trust and nonpartisanship	Conscientious	Creative	Identifying options for less-harmful ways abusers meet their needs
Verified data to control rumours & strategise protection responses	Certainty	Ambivalence	Navigating the complexity of security priorities of survivors
Gaining critical mass to influence decisions and challenge power	Quantity	Quality	Connecting immediate protection to structural change
Understanding recurring patterns of violence	Cause and effect	Synchronicity	Dropping plans when opportunities spontaneously arise
Firm in the rejection of all forms of violence	Hard	Soft	Softening to disarm opponents or fluidly circumventing threat

Figure 1: UCP actors rely on qualities associated with the right side (yin) as well as with qualities associated with the left side of the brain or the heart (yang). Effective application of UCP often constitutes of skilful weaving of qualities from both sides for the purpose of protecting civilians.

4.2 Conflict analysis

Protection analysis often does not start from the perspective of the affected population despite the fact that they are the ones who best understand the specific risks they face. Grounding analysis in affected people's perspectives requires enough trust for community members to share sensitive information about their safety and security with humanitarian staff.

InterAction, Embracing The Protection Outcome Mindset: We all have a role to play (2020)

The UCP programming cycle usually begins with conflict analysis. A UCP implementing agency may have received requests or recommendations to establish a presence in a specific conflict situation, but if initial conflict analysis indicates that the application of UCP in that situation is likely to be ineffective, inappropriate, or not feasible, the requests

may have to be turned down. The UCP agency may be able to support the requesting actors in different ways, without establishing a presence, or refer the request to other actors that may be in a better position to respond. In situations where UCP agencies *are* in a good position to respond, they must first understand the people involved in the conflict, their positions, attitudes, and behaviours, in order to formulate appropriate protection strategies.

UCP practitioners are particularly keen to understand the role of violence in any conflict. After all, their main objectives are to prevent or reduce violence and to protect civilians from violence. UCP itself is not focused on transforming conflict, but contributes to a safer environment in which local people can work to transform their contexts.

The difference between conflict and violence is important. Conflict refers to the tensions between people over specific needs or wants they try to fulfil. It is the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving their respective goals (Galtung, 2003 p.3). Conflict is a part of life and cannot be avoided. Violence on the other hand, is a particular response to conflict and can be avoided. It is behaviour that involves the use of force intended to dominate, hurt, damage, or kill someone or something.

Violence can be physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional. These types of violence are usually called *direct violence*. This is violence inflicted directly on one person by another. Violence can also be *indirect*, such as cultural violence or structural violence. These structures harm people and prevent them from meeting their basic needs while simultaneously communicating that some people are less valued, even less human, than others. The dehumanization of a community of people by attacking their way of life is a form of cultural violence. Structural violence refers to violence that is built into social, political, or economic structures. Unjust or violent structures are often an underlying cause for secondary violence (e.g. oppressed minority groups may resort to physical violence as a response to unequal access to economic resources). UCP practitioners mostly focus on preventing or protecting civilians from direct violence, though they may support or protect civilians that are working to address cultural or structural violence.

Violence is one particular response to conflict and it involves choice. It can be prevented, reduced, or stopped. Conflict, on the other hand, is inevitable, and while it cannot be eliminated, it can be resolved or transformed so that it does not lead to violence. “Conflict prevention, to prevent conflicts, is meaningless. But ‘violence prevention,’ to prevent violence, is extremely meaningful and beneficial.” (Galtung 2004, p.3) Conflict can even be used as an opportunity for positive change. This is exactly what peacebuilders aim for. They try to find solutions to a conflict that transcend the differences between the conflicting parties and promote reconciliation. Peacekeepers and UCP practitioners, on the other hand, aim to stop violence and support stability sufficient to allow peacebuilding to occur. They help to create a platform from which peacebuilders can address the root causes of a conflict. Whereas peacebuilders aim to realize the best possible future, UCP practitioners aim to prevent worst-case scenarios. It is with this objective in mind that they conduct conflict analysis.

WHAT IS CONFLICT ANALYSIS?

Conflict analysis refers to the detailed examination of the elements, structures, and dynamics of a conflict. It facilitates understanding of a particular conflict, in order to prevent violence and protect civilians.

HOW DOES CONFLICT ANALYSIS WORK?

In order to prevent violence, it is first necessary to understand who commits acts of violence, why they do it, and how. The same understanding is required in order to strengthen the safety and security of civilians and to strengthen local peace infrastructures. In order to achieve these objectives, UCP practitioners must know what local security mechanisms and peace infrastructures are already in place and if and why they are not working effectively. Conflict analysis is best carried out in close collaboration with local groups. The purpose of conflict analysis is not to come up with the most authoritative overall analysis, but to deepen understanding of the conflict for the sake of providing protection. Misinterpretation of the conflict may not only lead to ineffective or inappropriate programming, but also risks endangering UCP personnel and local actors. Because conflicts are not static, conflict analysis is repeated frequently to ensure that programming is in line with changing developments and dynamics. Analysis tends to deepen the longer an intervention continues, as more is learned and understood.

Protracted conflicts are often complex, and the motivations of involved actors vary considerably. Some actors may have good intentions, but their presence, affiliation, or behaviour has a negative impact on the conflict dynamics. Other actors overtly support peace, but secretly work to prolong the conflict, using other parties to carry out acts of violence. Some actors benefit from the conflict and are deeply invested in its continuation. Others perceive that they can only achieve their desired outcomes through violent conflict. In order to influence the key actors up and down the chain of command, UCP practitioners must know (as best they can) the overt and hidden alliances, vulnerability points, and affiliations of different actors in the conflict. To understand the complexity and subtleties of these power dynamics, conflict analysis needs to be undertaken from different perspectives.

Conflict analysis may take into consideration culture, social relationships, history, economics, politics, gender, geography, and demography:

- **Culture:** a cultural analysis of conflict considers traditional modes of conflict resolution and how the use of customs, language, symbols, and local beliefs influences the conflict;
- **Religion:** analysis of how the application of religious beliefs fuels the conflict and/or contributes to reconciliation and peace;
- **Social relationships:** analysis of social relationships looks at the forms and patterns of relationships. This includes the relationships between the actual conflicting parties as well as their relationships with allies, neutral parties, followers, communities, families, provocateurs, and victims;
- **History:** a historical analysis identifies how events from the past and remembrances of those events underlie a conflict situation, and reveals their contribution to the conflict situation;

- **Economics:** an economic analysis addresses the aspects of access, control, distribution, and management of economic resources that play an important role in the conflict;
- **Politics:** a political analysis is used to identify the patterns of power relationships that exist within and between the communities in conflict. It describes aspects of political life in relation to authority, decision-making processes, and the use of or role of the media;
- **Gender:** a gender analysis considers the existing hierarchical relationships and differentiated roles in a community, based on perceived sexual identity (e.g., structures of patriarchal culture, gender-based task divisions, and different points of view on and experiences of conflict between men and women) as well as the different impacts of the conflict based on these relationships and roles;
- **Geography:** a geographical analysis addresses the roles that the natural environment and its meanings and uses play in a conflict (proximity to mountains and water, desertification, seasons, natural resources, land ownership, and land status);
- **Demography:** a demographic analysis explores how size, structure, and distribution of populations are affected by or affect conflict (e.g., relative size and distribution of ethnic communities in a region, migration patterns of people as a result of displacement).

While this multidisciplinary approach provides many perspectives from which to analyse the context of a conflict, other methods achieve results through a more focused investigation. For example, one can examine the attitudes and behaviour of specific groups, or link cross-cutting issues (e.g., the interplay of economic, cultural, and political factors in the emergence of a particular rebel group). The Do No Harm method focuses on connectors (local capacities for peace) and dividers (sources of tension) and is particularly relevant for UCP (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects n.d.).³ This method begins by assessing several elements that play a role in a conflict: systems and institutions; attitudes and actions; values and interests; symbols and occasions; and the experiences of conflicting parties. It then determines for each conflict the elements that connect communities to each other as well as the elements that divide them apart. Since UCP aims to prevent violence and, at the same time, to strengthen local peace infrastructures, this type of analysis is particularly helpful because the dividers it identifies often constitute a threat to be reduced and the connectors are a means to strengthen local peace infrastructures.

CONFLICT ANALYSIS IN ACTION

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, conflict analysis is usually conducted at the beginning of the UCP programming cycle, before entry, to assess the appropriateness and feasibility of UCP in a specific conflict situation. However, conflict analysis is also conducted regularly after entry. UCP personnel on the ground are in direct contact with conflicting parties and will have access to additional information, which allows them to strengthen their initial pre-entry analysis. Moreover, as conflict dynamics continuously change, regular conflict analysis supports UCP practitioners in assessing whether their strategies and activities are still relevant and appropriate.

3 The Do No Harm Method was developed by the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA).

Whatever approach is used for conflict analysis, asking the right questions to the right people is key. Box 2 provides an overview of key questions that can be used for conflict analysis. These questions follow a basic linear approach to conflict analysis—while recognizing that conflicts themselves are not a linear process—that starts with the facts relating to the surface layer of events. The following step concentrates on the various actors involved in the conflict, their motivations, and their intentions. The third step takes a closer look at the aims and purposes in the conflict, and the final step explores the causes and the dynamics of conflict.

Conflict analysis is ideally undertaken through an inclusive process involving a broad array of community members (women, religious leaders, youth, etc.). This ensures that different perspectives on the conflict are taken into account, especially the perspectives of women and minority groups. Conflict analysis can be done through conflict mapping exercises, interviews, storytelling, or focus group discussions. In many cases this turns out to be a win-win situation for UCP practitioners and local actors involved in the process. Whereas local actors have in-depth knowledge about the conflict, they often gain new insights by reflecting together through the lens of different models. Moreover, in certain conflict areas there are few spaces safe enough for local actors to come together and talk about conflict and violence. Mapping, drawing or other visual representations of the conflict analysis tends to be particularly effective.

BOX 2 | QUESTIONS FOR CONFLICT ANALYSIS

Facts or the surface layer of events:

- When did violence break out? Between whom? What triggered it?
- What have been the subsequent political and military events?
- How has the conflict shifted geographically?
- Are there people displaced? From what groups? Areas? How many? Where are they?
- Have there been cessations of hostilities, ceasefires or peace talks? Who participated, who was absent, who organized them?
- Are there more parties to the conflict now than in the beginning? Why? Who are they?
- Are civilians being targeted?
- Are certain groups disproportionately incurring casualties?
- What role have international actors played in the history of the conflict?
- What role, if any, does the media play in the conflict?

Actors involved in a conflict:

- What are the relationships between the different parties in the conflict?
- How do the different parties portray each other? How do they define themselves?
- What internal opposition is there to the violence? How is it working?
- What traditional methods of conflict resolution exist? How are they working?
- Which international actors are visibly or discreetly involved in the conflict?

- What is the internal structure of the respective warring parties?
- What do warring parties claim is their power base? What is their real power base?
- How are they funded?
- Are children being forced to fight?
- Where do the parties get their weapons?
- How do warring parties portray groups opposed to violence and international interveners?

Aims and purposes in a conflict:

- Why do the warring parties say they have to fight? What are their claims?
- Who supports the warring parties?
- What resources are fuelling the conflict?
- What are the stated claims and purposes of the civil opposition to the violence?
- What are the stated claims and purposes of the outside interveners in a conflict?
- What humanitarian pretensions do the warring parties claim?
- How credible do you and others find the stated claims and purposes?

Causes and the dynamics of conflict:

- What are the older, historical, and deep structural factors that have contributed to the conflict?
- What are the major factors that contributed to historical tensions leading to violence?
- What is the current dynamic of conflict, why does the conflict appear to continue?
- Is the conflict currently in a phase where it is susceptible to influence or not?
- What may be the stabilizing points in the situation?

CHALLENGES FOR CONFLICT ANALYSIS

Though precise conflict analysis will in most cases lead to the identification of appropriate steps to undertake, there are certain challenges:

- Conflicts are dynamic processes: analyses need to be done again and again, which takes time;
- Conflicts can be unpredictable: effective conflict analysis may create the false impression that everything is understood, which in turn may weaken alertness;
- Pure objectivity is impossible, and personal biases may be hard to detect; moreover, UCP practitioners do not always have equal access to all conflicting parties;
- Some cultures encourage analytical thinking more than others: lack of analytical thinking does not mean lack of capability;
- There are always different ways to approach organizing an analysis, which can be confusing as these may lead to different conclusions;
- Undertaking analysis without pre-determined objectives can hinder the process, as there are no clear demarcations of what constitutes success and failure.

4.3

Types of conflict and their relevance for UCP

One reason for the existence of various conflict analysis approaches and models is that there are many different types of conflicts. The type of conflict has serious implications for UCP programming. In a situation where armed groups specifically target internationals, protective accompaniment is in most cases not an effective or appropriate method to increase the safety and security of civilians. In fact, public affiliation with internationals may make civilians a target in such a situation. In less extreme situations UCP methods may simply need to be modified to fit a particular conflict situation.

UCP has been conducted in situations of horizontal and vertical conflicts (see 3.1), inter-state and intra-state conflicts, as well as conflicts over natural resources, political power, ethnic identity, self-determination, and territory. Most of the violent conflicts nowadays take place within the borders of a state (intra-state) and are fought over issues like identity, territory, power, or natural resources. At the same time, many of these intra-state conflicts are highly internationalized. The ongoing conflict in Syria that began in 2011 is a case in point; Russia, Iran, USA, the EU, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Israel as well as non-state actors like Hezbollah, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS), and al Qaeda were at some point all taking active roles.

The following sections provide some examples of different types of conflict and their relevance for UCP programming.

4.3.1

Vertical and horizontal conflict

VERTICAL CONFLICT

UCP has been predominantly used in situations of vertical conflict, where UCP practitioners have protected civilians caught in conflicts between the state and non-state combatants. A prominent example is the armed conflict between the government of Guatemala and various leftist rebel groups, mainly supported by Mayan indigenous people and Ladino peasants. In this situation the UCP organizations involved include Witness for Peace, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Peace Brigades International (PBI), and the Guatemala Accompaniment Project. In the armed conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, both PBI and Nonviolent Peaceforce were involved. The latter also engages in the conflict

between Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Building international networks, providing proactive engagement, providing protective accompaniment, early warning/early response, confidence building, and using multi-track dialogue are typical UCP strategies and methods used in situations of vertical conflict.

International actors have more frequently undertaken UCP in conflicts that are primarily vertical because state actors have a responsibility to protect civilians and can be held accountable. Moreover, most of them care about their reputation as duty bearers. Therefore, they tend to be more responsive to concerns raised by international third parties than, for example, religious extremists or hard liners within community conflicts. This is not necessarily the case for local UCP actors. Though the presence of both international and national observers limits the space of state actors to use excessive force, allowing their presence may also improve state actors' reputations both domestically and internationally. It shows the world that they have nothing to hide.

Many non-state armed actors who are politically motivated and challenge or aim to replace their government also care about their reputation. As a Colombian human rights lawyer accompanied by PBI mentioned, "The paramilitaries respect international presence ... they are trying to institutionalise themselves legally. The collaboration with the state is very clear ... The paramilitaries are steadily occupying government positions, and this makes the situation more delicate for them" (Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA 1998b). In some situations, however, the repercussions for state or non-state actors will not affect the perception of their legitimacy, their reputation, or cause them to lose support in some important way. For these reasons and others, reputation is not always a sensitive pressure point. UCP then becomes increasingly challenging, though not impossible.

HORIZONTAL CONFLICT

Horizontal conflicts refer to conflicts between non-state actors. This includes tribal conflicts and conflicts between religious or ethnic groups. Conflicts between indigenous communities and multinationals are also referred to as 'horizontal', though multinationals are usually backed by state power. An example of UCP in a horizontal conflict is the work of NP in the midst of tribal violence in Jonglei, South Sudan (see case study in box 2 of module 3). Providing UCP in a situation of horizontal conflict often implies a shift of methods. Conflict mitigation, building relationships at the grassroots level, rumour control, and EWER tend to become more prominent in these situations than building international networks, conducting systemic nonviolent advocacy, and providing protective accompaniment.

Foreign observers may not easily deter religious or ethnic groups in violent conflict with each other. Moreover, these conflicts are predominantly played out at the grassroots level, and large numbers of civilians are actively and openly involved. This implies a different strategy for violence prevention. Providing shuttle diplomacy or conflict mitigation between the two communities is usually a key method for preventing violence in such conflicts. At the same time, it may be that in these types of conflict, armed actors are moved by the courage and humanity of UCP practitioners, and recalled to their own

cultural ethics. If the state is party to the conflict, however, even these methods may need to be scaled back or applied in a less prominent way, because state actors may view the participation of UCP organizations in conflict mitigation or shuttle diplomacy as interference in internal affairs.

Although, in theory, horizontal and vertical conflicts appear to be two distinct types of conflict, in reality they are not. Most vertical conflicts have horizontal components and vice versa. Ethnic conflicts may be instigated by state actors to legitimize increased military presence in a specific area or create distractions around sensitive political decisions; mining companies locked in conflict with indigenous communities may be supported and protected by national security forces; clans fighting each other at the grassroots level may receive financial support from political elites in return for votes or land rights; conflicts between national governments and freedom fighters may create tensions between ethnic groups; and peace agreements may create conflict within armed groups and between the constituencies of different factions over political influence, development aid, and even peace support efforts. For example, in Mindanao, there are *rido*, which are local conflicts between clans or groups of extended family and their allies. These *rido* are related to the vertical conflict between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Philippines government, though on the surface they may appear simply horizontal, with only local implications. This reality underscores the importance of careful and continual conflict analysis. UCP practitioners must be flexible and adept at using all of the methods available to them as they engage with a particular conflict situation.

4.3.2

Power, identity, and natural resources

Today's dictators and authoritarians are far more sophisticated, savvy, and nimble than they once were. Faced with growing pressures, the smartest among them neither hardened their regimes into police states nor closed themselves off from the world; instead they learned and adapted. Modern authoritarians have successfully honed new techniques, methods, and formulas for preserving power, refashioning dictatorship for the modern age.

William J. Dobson. *The Dictator's Learning Curve* (2013, p.4.)

Issues of power and identity are complex and the following sections are a brief mention of aspects of these concepts specifically related to UCP conflict analysis and work. Most horizontal and vertical conflicts are fuelled by the struggle for power, identity, and/or natural resources. Just as conflicts are rarely purely horizontal or purely vertical, they are rarely only about one issue. The conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government (1976 – 2005), for example, appeared to be a conflict about self-determination. However, the existence of large amounts of oil and gas, the economic and political power linked to these resources, as well as the identity of the Acehnese people played important roles in the conflict. Another example would be Autessere's

(2012) work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which describes the complex interrelationship of factors that contribute to the ongoing conflicts there. Her work contradicts the mainstream explanation that the conflicts are primarily over resources. Many similar examples could be cited, including the well-known case of the so-called blood diamonds.

For UCP practitioners to prevent violence and increase the safety and security of civilians, it is crucial that the different aspects of a conflict and their interaction are understood. Many conflicts that appear to be about ethnic or religious identity have deeper/other roots related to political power, social justice, and equal access to natural resources. In order to be most effective, UCP interventions must take into account these root causes.

POWER

Most conflicts are about power in one way or another, usually about political and economic power. Power is the ability to get what you want or, as scholar Kenneth Boulding put it, ‘the ability to change the future’ (Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA 1998b). Significant power inequities become occasions for the abuse of power. Over time, these inequities are destructive to people and relationships.

There are different forms of power. One way to categorize these forms is as visible, hidden, and invisible power (Gaventa, 2006). **Visible power** includes formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions, and procedures of decision-making; **hidden power** relates to influential people and institutions maintaining their influence and determining the agenda; and **invisible power** involves the shaping of psychological and ideological boundaries of participation. One example of this invisible power is the profound influence that racism has on on people’s self perception and the limits of what is possible. Another example is the impact of traumas (suffered by all conflict parties, including their leadership) have on a negotiator’s ability to represent the best interests of their respective sides during peace negotiations. Unless they have had the opportunity for trauma recovery, their emotions may be too easily reactivated based on the years of animosities, and be limited in their mental and emotional bandwidth by anger, jealousy, fear, paranoia and sorrow—psychological states that may not serve them, or their peoples, well. Defensiveness and indoctrination may have the same negative effect. Understanding how the different forms of power are at work in conflicts creates opportunities for UCP practitioners to influence appropriate decision makers and strengthen relevant peace infrastructures.

Scholars commonly speak of power as something that is contested or negotiated. We recognize power structures in our world—leaders of states and military commanders at the top, villagers and footsoldiers at the bottom—but if power is the ability to get what you want, to change the future, or just to get things done, then some potential power always resides in those at the bottom of the power structure. Their commanders have power only to the extent that they can get others to do for them what they want, and if a soldier is able to use his position far from the influence of the commander to get what he wants, then he has power, too. As anthropologist Carolyn Nordstrom wrote, “Once we put human actors into the power equation, we find that power is constantly being reformulated as it moves from command to action. Where, then, does the power

of war lie?“ Individual armed actors may be part of a militia or army, but each has their own motivations, and this presents both challenges and opportunities for UCP actors. If the command structure is weak, then individual soldiers may behave unpredictably. When analysing a conflict, it is important to consider the motivations of those who claim to have power or authority as parties to a conflict, but also to recognize the limits of that power in reality. At the same time, one should not ignore the motivations of the individual armed actor at the local and the individual level.

The logic of power is turned upside down. Perhaps my favorite example of this is the response of an underage soldier on a battlefield when I asked him why he was fighting. With a profound seriousness, he looked at me and replied: "I forgot."

Carolyn Nordstrom, Shadows of War (2004, p. 75)

If a young soldier can forget why he is fighting, that is an opportunity for him to consider that he may choose not to fight—that he has the power to follow an alternative path. For the UCP practitioners it provides an opportunity to empower an armed actor to respond non-violently. This may contribute to short-term protection, but also to a longer-term relationship that would increase security more broadly.

UCP practitioners must also be aware of the power imbalances in their relationships with others. Being a foreigner, with access to many different goods and services, as well as the power to leave if an area becomes too dangerous, creates powerful imbalances. Similarly, many foreigners from the Global North arrive in the Global South with all the history of colonial and neo-colonialism built into how they are perceived and responded to, as well as shaping their own perceptions and assumptions about people and communities. There is a tension within the practice of UCP regarding how to leverage racial, national, and gendered privilege. On the one hand, the presence of an "outside" companion, especially one from the Global North, has been acknowledged as a tool that can be a powerful deterrent in the right situations. On the other hand, by choosing to leverage racial, national, and gender privileges, a UCP practitioner risks perpetuating harmful neocolonial structures. As UCP scholar Lisa Schirch states, “The dilemma to peacekeepers is whether the use of racist attitudes, which may protect their lives, may also indirectly serve to maintain racist attitudes and dependency upon outsiders.” (Schirch 2006)

One of the ways UCP practitioners mitigate this risk is through affirming the primacy of local actors in their work (See Module 2.2). This is not only a practice of anticolonialism; local actors' knowledge of the context, relationships, warning signs, and other critical information is incredibly powerful in identifying effective and sustainable UCP strategies that fit the local context. Thus, it is critical to avoid simplistic analysis of power structures, recognizing that power relationships are to some extent co-created and influenced by perceptions as well as knowledge, resources and other sources of power.

IDENTITY

Identity is a prominent factor in conflicts worldwide but is often used intentionally or unintentionally to obscure other root causes, or set different groups against each other.

Identity issues include religion, race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and culture. Conflicts over identity occur when a specific group feels that their sense of self or distinctiveness is threatened or denied legitimacy. This sense of self is fundamental to their interpretation of the world, as well as to the self-esteem of the group. A threat to the identity of the group is likely to produce a strong response. Typically, this response is both aggressive and defensive, and can escalate quickly into an intractable conflict. Identity plays a role in many religious and ethnic conflicts. It is also a key issue in many gender and family conflicts, when men and women disagree on the proper role or 'place' of the other (Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA, 1998a). National identity or the lack thereof plays an important role in many of today's struggles for independence. Many of these struggles are the result of colonial boundaries that forced a national identity upon groups that did not share a sense of self.

Identity can be divisive and a source of tension, but it can also bring people together. Ethnic identity may divide two groups and lead to conflict, but their shared religious identity or economic interests may unite them. UCP interventions can address the tensions and make use of the connecting opportunities, as they work to prevent or reduce violence. Moreover, for international (nonpartisan) UCP actors it is often much easier to gain access to actors on both sides of a conflict divide than it is for local peace workers.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources (e.g. oil, water, gas, timber, rubber, coltan, diamonds) are increasingly the subject of competition and conflict. In many places local communities have been forced to leave their ancestral lands or witness degradation of the environment due to large-scale operations by multinational corporations. These multinationals often operate with the support of the national government as well as other governments. Sometimes security forces are used to forcibly relocate local people off their land, as well as protect employees and assets of these multinationals. Conversely some non-state armed groups may draw financial strength from controlling certain natural resources.

For UCP teams, the involvement of multinational corporations poses new challenges. An international mining company responsible for environmental damage and displacement of indigenous people may not be deterred by international presence at the grassroots level. However, their operations are based on the consent of the national government, and multinationals almost certainly care about their reputation among consumers or investors in global markets. Moreover, their managers may be part of the small international community in the area. This gives UCP practitioners the necessary entry points to act. They need to be aware of the multi-national corporate sector and its contributions to conflicts. For this reason, many UCP actors that have a presence on the ground also engage in advocacy at the international level to educate law makers, diplomats, or public opinion and influence policies.