5

UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION IN PRACTICE: LIVING IN AND EXITING THE COMMUNITY

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OVERVIEW AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Applying UCP in situations of violent conflict requires ongoing analysis of the situation as well as security management. UCP practitioners tailor their strategies and methods to continuously changing conflict dynamics, and in response to the initiatives of local partners. A rare window of opportunity for the prevention of violence may suddenly appear amidst a situation of turmoil. In order to use this window of opportunity to maximum effect, all the pieces on the chessboard need to be in place. Security measures and contingency plans must be updated and known to all UCP personnel at all times. They need to be prepared for the worst-case scenario, even if it is unlikely that this scenario will ever occur. When violence prevention is the goal, a situation where 'nothing' happens is an indicator of success.

Module 5 starts with a description of context analysis, followed by a description of security management. These are two major components of the UCP programme cycle that are carried out continually. They are initially modelled on the outcomes of conflict analysis and needs assessment. In turn, context analysis informs the occasional review of conflict analysis and also leads to additional needs assessments. Furthermore, context analysis accompanies and strengthens the application of UCP methods. The last stage of the UCP programming cycle to be described involves UCP exit strategies, which guide UCP personnel in phasing out of a particular situation of violent conflict. Of course, local protection efforts do not 'exit', though as threats change or significantly decrease, local actors may focus on other issues.

After describing the final different components of the UCP programming cycle, completing a process that was started in module 4, module 5 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. Module 5 concludes with a number of key dilemmas that UCP practitioners may experience throughout the UCP programming cycle.

BOX 1| LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe how the context is analyzed within UCP
- Describe the basics of UCP security management
- Develop an exit strategy
- Develop and apply basic UCP strategies to specific examples of varying conflicts and population types
- Describe key dilemmas of UCP

Summary of Key Messages

- Successful UCP interventions are complex, requiring meticulous and often ongoing conflict and context analyses, needs assessments, security management, communication with multiple parties, external support structures, exit strategies, appropriate choices of personnel and partners, and the application of appropriate methods and skills.

- Context analysis refers to the detailed examination of the ongoing developments and dynamics of a specific situation. It allows UCP practitioners to identify trends in violence in order to predict and prevent crises, as well as to prepare for a timely response to a crisis situation.

- The security of UCP field staff and assets is inextricably linked to its mission of improving the security and protection of civilians in situations of violent conflict. UCP practitioners cannot protect others if they cannot first protect themselves. The first concern of all UCP fieldwork, therefore, is to ensure the security of its own staff, reputation, and assets.

- UCP operations are phased out when local actors no longer need or want UCP, when UCP has achieved some of its objectives but is unable to do more, or when UCP has failed or has been expelled by the government. Exit strategies need to have clear and attainable objectives and must address how UCP efforts will be sustained by local infrastructures, following the exit of non-local personnel.

- During the implementation phase, UCP practitioners will face a variety of dilemmas that are caused by the tensions between the various key principles and objectives of UCP. Strict adherence to these principles alone will not solve these dilemmas. A deep understanding of their intent, as well as experience and common sense are essential. Team discussion can help to clarify how to apply UCP principles in a particular situation.

- Effective UCP requires sustained effort, flexibility, persistence, and the strategic use of a wide variety of methods. Successful UCP means being present at the right time, the right place, and ready to apply the right methods and the right skills to support local actors in stopping violence and resolving conflicts.

5.1
Context analysis

> *In our field site we had imagined what had happened and might happen. What is more or less likely? We had done analysis…of a hot spot area. That really helped and we knew among national staff who could deal with what; it was clearly defined. Even if we had nothing to do, we would just visit (the) military and MILF for example…it was helpful …at one point they become really close (to fighting). The leader was on leave and he was following (the situation), but he asked for my opinion if they should fight back or not. For five seconds I was stunned…but then I told him that I spoke to the camp monitors and they told me it was safe. I don't know if he trusted me but he trusted us.*
>
> *Mahesh (2018) in Oakley, What is the relationship between the situated learning of Unarmed Civilian Protection workers and gendered power dynamics? (2020, p. 125)*

After conducting a conflict analysis, UCP organizations will have determined if there is a role for UCP to prevent violence or protect civilians in a particular situation of violent conflict. They will also have identified the need for UCP among communities affected by this conflict and received acceptance from these communities to establish a presence in the area. Finally, they will have identified populations and individuals that most urgently require UCP services. Local organizations and individuals engaging in self-protection efforts may not have gone through these formal steps. Nonetheless, they will have conducted some form of analysis of the conflict, needs, and potential responses.

Based on these outcomes, UCP teams will start formulating strategies and tailoring UCP methods to address the needs of people identified at risk of harm from current or potential violence. When enough confidence is present that UCP will be useful (based upon extensive exploration and encouragement from local communities), sufficient funding is in place, and initial arrangements made, a UCP intervention will begin. While UCP personnel will have already analyzed the conflict and understood its dynamics, the situation around them, including the conflict dynamics, will be continuously changing. To make sure that the strategies that have been formulated remain relevant against the backdrop of a changing situation, they need to analyse the local context. This not only serves the purpose of streamlining programming, it is also a matter of security. Understanding the context from which threats arise, and formulating informed strategies to reduce exposure to those threats, makes the difference between risk avoidance and risk management.

WHAT IS CONTEXT ANALYSIS?

Context analysis or situational analysis, as used by some UCP organizations, refers to the detailed examination of the ongoing developments and dynamics of a specific

situation. UCP teams conduct context analysis to identify trends of violence in order to predict and prevent crises, as well as to prepare for a timely response to a crisis situation. Context analysis is different from conflict analysis, but they are interrelated. *Conflict* analysis has a limited focus on one particular conflict and its development through time (focus on the past). *Context* analysis on the other hand has a broad focus on one particular moment in time (focus on the present). *Conflict* analysis precedes context analysis and is undertaken periodically, especially at the beginning and end of a project cycle. *Context* analysis is done continually. UCP personnel at the field level may conduct context analysis on a weekly or monthly basis.

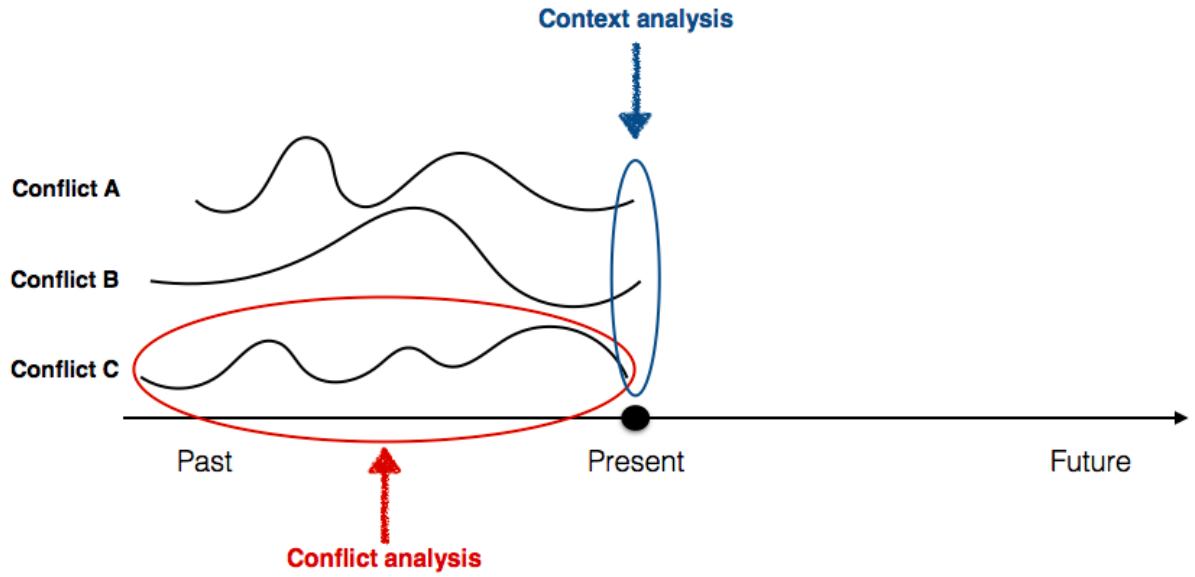

Figure 1: *Conflict* **analysis has a limited focus on one particular conflict and its development through time (focus on the past).** *Context* **analysis on the other hand has a broad focus on one particular moment in time (focus on the present). Context analysis does not only focus on conflicts, but a wider variety of relevant trends and developments.**

HOW DOES CONTEXT ANALYSIS WORK?

Though context analysis is conducted continually, it is especially important in situations where:

- UCP is starting its operations or moves its operations to unknown areas;
- There is a sense by those in the field or at headquarters that UCP methods are not adequately addressing the situation;
- Major developments have changed the conflict dynamics or the positions and power bases of conflicting parties.

There are many different ways to undertake context analysis. Most models follow these basic steps:

- Infrmation gathering and identification of priorities of locations, methods, and vulnerable populations;
- Analysis and interpretation of events and specific actions of influential actors;
- Establishment of linkages between political, economic, social, religious, and security aspects;
- Revealing and understanding trends;
- Assessment of the role of UCP personnel within the context.

Context analysis includes details about threats, power plays, and hidden agendas of conflicting parties, as well as the perception of local actors about UCP and its practitioners (see box 2 for sample questions that guide UCP team members for an internal context analysis).

BOX 2| SAMPLE QUESTIONS THAT GUIDE UCP TEAMS IN CONTEXT ANALYSIS

(addressed to UCP personnel, not directly to local actors). In all the following questions attention should be paid to changes, trends and patterns:

Civilians:

- Who do you see in the community: women, girls, men, boys, elders, or disabled? Estimate numbers.
- How would you describe the atmosphere? (Do they seem happy? Angry? Fearful? Calm?)
- Are there areas where you do not see any civilians?
- Do you see any armed civilians? What were they armed with?
- Are civilians initiating contact with humanitarian workers? Are they willing to talk when approached?
- Are people fleeing or preparing to do so? If yes, is it a particular group?
- Do you see anyone injured? Anyone who lost a limb?

Armed actors:

- Do you see armed actors – if so, who?
- Does the community appear to accept them?
- Are their numbers increasing?
- What do the uniforms look like on the armed actors that you see? (e.g., colours, pattern, armbands, hats)
- How do they behave towards civilians?
- Are the armed actors engaging with humanitarian workers? If so, what is the engagement like?

Infrastructure and surroundings:

- Do you see a functioning market? What goods do you see in the market?
- What kinds of shelter do people have? What is the condition of civilian shelter?
- Are children going to school?

- Do you see any recent destruction? (e.g., trees damaged, bullet holes in walls)
- Are any public buildings (e.g., schools, hospitals) occupied by armed actors? If so, where and by whom?

Humanitarian experience:

- Are you able to move in the community freely? Are there areas that you cannot travel?
- Did anyone accompany you to certain locations? If so, who and where?
- Did anyone threaten you? Or were you harmed in any way?
- Did anyone question what you were doing? If so, who? Why?

Specific protection indicators:

- Did you see anyone harmed during your visit? If so, who and what were the circumstances?
- Did you see any children associated with the armed groups?
- Was there any direct threat to life?
- Are the threats specific to women? Children? Elderly people? Young men?
- Is civilian movement restricted?
- What is the ratio of men to women in the community?
- What, if anything, has changed in the local, regional, national, and international context that is impacting our work? Why?

An important part of context analysis focuses on the role of UCP practitioners within a particular context. It is important to know how local parties, including their own partners, perceive them and also to assess if there is a risk of becoming too involved with non-state armed actors. UCP personnel need to understand if the government is attempting to manipulate them or use them to strengthen their position. A corrupt government may, for example, collect large amounts of money from the UCP organization through a variety of bureaucratic measures. For instance, each time UCP personnel provide protection to human rights defenders who are critical of a corrupt government, the government may respond by refusing to extend their visas. The government may also use the presence of UCP teams to show the world that they are respecting human rights, while curtailing their movements to a bare minimum. Through context analysis, UCP teams analyse this type of behaviour and determine whether their current strategies are effective. They may conclude that their presence by and large strengthens the position of the corrupt government and undermines the work of human rights defenders. In that case they will, in consultation with those defenders, either change their strategies or leave a particular area, or the country. As Liam Mahony writes in response to what he describes as 'the failure of the UN and the wider humanitarian community to improve the respect for the human rights of the Rohingya people in Myanmar':

> *The humanitarian community in Myanmar has allowed itself to be boxed in to a very small space, pressured and manipulated into silent complicity with ethnic cleansing, and it remains to be seen whether the UN and its humanitarian partners will find the courage and creativity to try to push that space open.*

In situations like this, international actors tend to bemoan how little political space and manoeuvrability they believe they have, and paradoxically use this as an excuse for not trying to expand it. But political space is very often self constrained: the Myanmar government has learned that it can depend on humanitarian self-censorship. However limited it may appear, that space has to be constantly contested, protected and expanded.

Liam Mahony, Time to break old habits, Fieldview Solutions (2018, p 46)

5.2
Security management

Some aggressions are preceded by threats. Others are not. However, the behaviour of individuals planning a targeted violent aggression often shows subtle signs, since they need to gather information about the right time to aggress, plan how to get to their target, and how to escape.

Enrique Eguren and Marie Caraj, Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders (2009, p.54)

Analysis of the security situation is an important part of context analysis. UCP teams operate in dangerous and volatile environments. Therefore, the work of UCP, by definition, involves a level of risk. In order to effectively mitigate and address risk factors, UCP organizations apply a management system for staff security and safety in the field (Peace Brigades International, 2009; Nonviolent Peaceforce, 2011). The security of UCP field staff and assets is inextricably linked to its mission of improving the security and protection of civilians in situations of violent conflict. UCP personnel cannot protect others if they cannot protect themselves. Moreover, they cannot provide a more secure environment for civil society organizations if they cannot provide a more secure environment for UCP.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety and security are often used interchangeably or in the same breath, but they are not exactly the same. Safety can be defined as being free from danger, risk, or injury; and security, as the condition of being protected from or not exposed to danger. Safety is a more complex word that implies an inner certainty that all is well. It has both emotional and physical attributes that both needs to be in agreement for safety to be achieved. In a sense, *security* is external, while *safety* is internal (Maddox, n.d). Security has also been

likened to an umbrella that protects safety or a process that ensures safety. In this section we refer to this umbrella or this process that shields both civilians at risk of violence as well as UCP actors that aim to protect them.

WHAT IS SECURITY MANAGEMENT?

Security in the context of internal UCP security management relates to the protection of UCP personnel from violence, and also the protection of the image and reputation of the UCP intervention and its organizing agency and of UCP assets. The image of the UCP intervention is not merely a matter of public relations. A negative image of UCP has direct implications for its capacity to protect. Additionally, measures are taken to avoid or mitigate the effects of circumstances that are not related to violence. These include 'accidents' caused by nature (e.g. avalanches, earthquakes) or other external circumstances like forest fires and road accidents. They also include illness, injury, and death resulting from medical conditions or from a lack of adherence to safety guidelines in the workplace.

HOW DOES SECURITY MANAGEMENT WORK?

UCP considers staff security *and* safety to be an integral part of its programmatic work. The credibility of UCP as a valid approach to civilian protection would be undermined if UCP agencies were not able to provide for the safety and security of their own staff. The safety and security of staff members are therefore an integrated and essential component of analysis, planning, implementation, and monitoring of all UCP related activities on the ground.

Staff safety and security are direct extensions of context analysis and are based on the same logic as UCP methods for civilian protection. For example, by observing troop movements, incidents of violence, and behaviour of local actors, UCP teams assess their own vulnerabilities and their capacities to reduce threats. They must also assess the strength of their networks with other actors whose visible concern helps to protect them. Just as they aim to reduce the vulnerabilities of threatened populations and increase their capacities to respond to threats, UCP practitioners also try to reduce their own vulnerabilities and increase their own capacities (see figure 2).

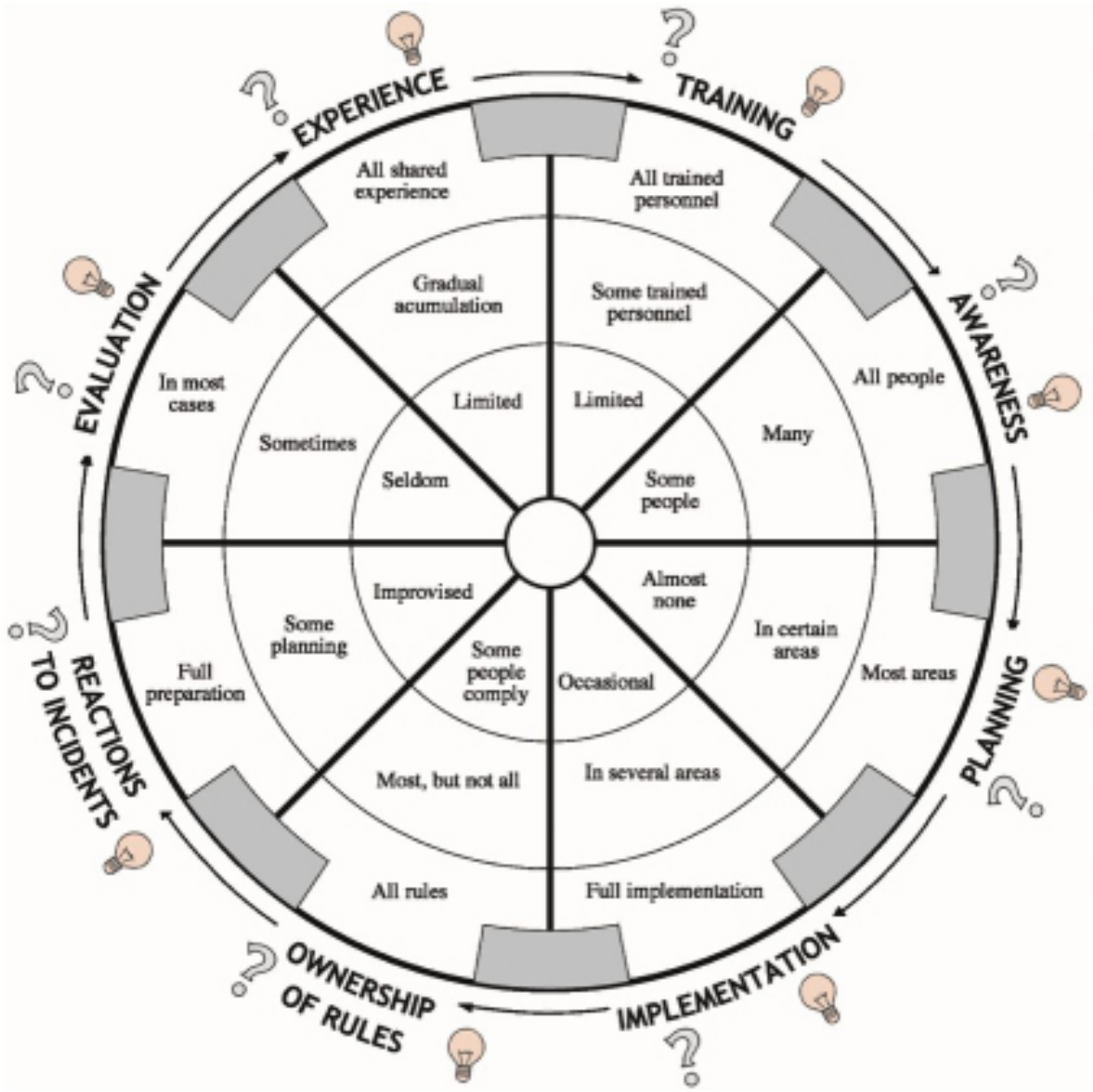

Figure 2: The Security Wheel (Eguren and Caraj, 2009) "A wheel must be round to turn; in other words, all b the spokes need to be of the same length. The same applies to the security wheel with its 8 spokes (components), representing the security management of an organisation…" (Eguren, 2009, p.133). By reducing vulnerabilities or strengthening capacities in weak components of the security wheel, UCP teams can strengthen their own security management and that of the organizations they support or protect.

Generally there are three types of threats UCP practitioners need to be aware of: direct threats, indirect threats, and common criminal attacks. Direct threats can be targeted to the UCP agency or an individual UCP actor. Such threats may be reduced with the support of influential actors within the UCP team's political support network, by improving or strengthening relationships with key actors, or by changing strategies. Indirect threats arise from the potential harm caused by violent incidents in the area or external circumstances such as natural disasters. This is about "being in the wrong place at the wrong time".

Indirect threats can often be reduced through context analysis, precaution, and contingency plans. UCP personnel are especially vulnerable to the third type of threat: common criminal attacks. These attacks are more difficult to prevent, as they are in most cases not clearly politically motivated (though they may have political undertones). Increased physical security (e.g. window bars, other protective barriers, care about traveling after dusk or alone) may be necessary to reduce threats. However, UCP practitioners usually prefer to keep these physical protection mechanisms to a minimum and use nonviolent options, though they have under rare circumstances relied on (armed) UN peacekeepers to evacuate. Close relationships with neighbours and community acceptance often go a long way in providing protection and do not damage the image of UCP as a force of unarmed protection.

SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN ACTION

The first step in managing staff security is the transmission of a clear understanding to all staff and all stakeholders of what UCP is. The next step is to gain a deep understanding of where UCP is placed within the conflict. This step is directly related to context analysis. The third step is to build security strategies. Different organizations may use some but not all of the following strategies. These strategies include:

- Building trust and acceptance among all (often qualified by legitimate or legally accessible) actors in the area to prevent harm;
- Protecting and monitoring the UCP organization's image and reputation in the communities and with all actors for being nonpartisan, independent, respecting the primacy of local actors;
- Establishing precautionary and preventive security measures (e.g. locks and fences, travelling in groups, varying routes, avoiding public displays of wealth) to prevent or reduce harm;
- Building relationships with influential stakeholders who can be called upon in situations when UCP practitioners are under threat;
- Being visible with uniforms and well-marked vehicles or in some cases being thoughtful about not using uniforms.
- Ensuring that UCP staff—both international and national—behave appropriately by local cultural standards;
- Including the perspectives and information from local partners, staff, and community in security analysis.

In order to be responsible and effective, UCP teams constantly monitor and analyse the level of risk so as not to exceed the threshold of 'acceptable risk'. They necessarily work in places where other (humanitarian or development) INGOs, agencies, and peacekeepers might not choose to work, go where they might not go, and engage in activities that they might avoid. This does not mean UCP practitioners are reckless, careless, or cavalier about their security. On the contrary, the work that they do requires them to be at least as security conscious, if not more so, than most other INGOs and agencies working in similar environments. This imperative is reflected in their pre-deployment training and ongoing alertness.

Dealing with direct threats to UCP is particularly important. Direct threats cannot be

mitigated through general security measures or context analysis in the same way that criminal attacks and indirect threats can. It relies upon having established relationships in advance with the hierarchies of the armed actors. When dealing with direct threats, UCP security strategy involves four essential steps aimed at reducing vulnerability to the perceived threat. UCP practitioners:

- Identify exactly what the threat is and where it comes from;
- Engage as directly as possible with the source of the threat to explain the nature and purpose of UCP;
- Move up the chain of command as far as necessary to remove the threat or seek out actors with the power to exert influence on decision makers or appropriate commanders;
- Proceed only if and when the threat has been effectively removed.

Many UCP actors apply some or all of the following precautionary measures to prevent direct threats:

- Maintaining nonpartisanship at all times, treating all parties with respect and goodwill;
- Avoiding public statements, denunciations, and any other activity that may embarrass, humiliate or demean any of the parties;
- Remaining as open and transparent as possible about all UCP activities with all parties concerned;
- Supporting parties in understanding that it is in their own interest to prevent and avoid attacks on civilians and other gross violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law;
- Maintaining a clear and unequivocal image of UCP as an institution that seeks to work with all parties to help them prevent violence from taking place. By doing so, UCP is helping these parties to improve or, at least, not tarnish their image with external actors
- Building and maintaining visible and transparent support networks.

These security measures are very much aligned to the methods and principles of UCP. Indeed, security is embedded in the DNA of UCP. It is not an add-on task. Thus, adhering to UCP principles in their work with communities automatically provides a certain amount of protection to UCP personnel. When UCP agencies deliberately choose to take sides or make public statements, they may strengthen other security measures, such as building an influential support network or taking extra measures to display transparency.

UCP security strategies are based on the assessment of specified threats rather than generalized ones. This enables UCP personnel to work in more places and circumstances than would otherwise be possible if they used a more traditional approach to security, based on generalized threats alone. The most important thing is that UCP practitioners do not take unacceptable or unnecessary risks; rather, they operate on a more analytically refined assessment of the specific threats they face.

> *Our relationships with the local communities will do more to protect us from ISIS sleeper cells and direct threats than a relationship with our influential*

actors… There is a very fine line between relationship building with influential actors who will be able to protect you in a security situation and unintentionally having this relationship be the reason for a direct threat (or indirect threat).

Security Manager for Nonviolent Peaceforce in Iraq, 2020

Recommended Resources for Further Study (Read)

- Eguren, E., *Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders,* 2005, Dublin: Front Line: International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders: http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/files/en/2312_Protection%20Manual%20for%20Human%20Rights%20Defenders.pdf

5.3
Exit strategies

Exit is not your process... It is the response of the partners and communities that really matters. Therefore, healthy exit involves letting the partners lead the process.

Rachel Hayman, et al., Exit Strategies and Sustainability: Lessons for Practitioners (2016 p.18)

Conflicts are continuously changing and so are the needs of civilians within conflicts. When threatened groups feel increasingly safe and empowered, and local protection infrastructures more effectively address conflicts and prevent violence, it may be time at least for international UCP team members to leave the area or the country. The decision to leave a particular area or country is not taken suddenly. UCP organizations formulate clear strategies to guide their country directors or implementation teams in making that decision and, in fact, work towards that outcome. This section describes these strategies that prepare for the exit of the international team. Clearly, local protection efforts will have their own, different set of concerns focused on sustainably maintaining the progress made in strengthening local infrastructure and in addressing conflicts nonviolently.

WHAT IS AN EXIT STRATEGY?

Despite the phrase 'exit strategy' becoming increasingly prevalent in peacekeeping and

peacebuilding discussions, there does not appear to be a common definition for the term. The term seems to have originated in business circles, moved to the military, and has more recently been applied to humanitarian and development-related third-party interventions. Nonetheless, the phrase implies that careful thought and preparation should be given to the timing and process with which an external organization (in this case, a UCP provider) withdraws from a field of action, so as to allow local actors to sustain the work undertaken (if appropriate) and minimize organizational disruption as the process of removal is completed.

HOW DOES AN EXIT STRATEGY WORK?

UCP operations are based on acceptance by local conflict parties as well as by the national government. Therefore, the three circumstances that would prompt UCP to exit are as follows:

- local actors no longer have need of the presence of external UCP agencies (success);
- the UCP mission has made progress in achieving at least some of the objectives but is prevented from completing all of them (partial success);
- the UCP mission faces a major contradiction between its presence or the objectives and principles of UCP and the desires of the local population (failure).

Lack of funding and expulsion by authorities could be added as additional circumstances, as this has played a role in the past in the exit of UCP agencies from situations of violent conflict, and may again in the future.

Local actors no longer need or have interest in the presence of external UCP agencies: When civilians are no longer threatened, and feel confident in their ability to protect themselves and/, or are effectively protected by state structures, the need for the presence of external UCP agencies has ceased. This may seem clear, but the reality is often more complex. First, as the collaboration between UCP teams and local actors progresses, additional areas of interest and need are easily identified. There are always vulnerable people who need to be protected, especially in an area that is emerging from protracted conflict. Deciding that a particular threat to a vulnerable population is not serious enough for an agency to maintain its presence is not easy.

Secondly, a complicating factor is the uncertainty of a peace process. Many peace processes, apparently well on the way to sustainable peace, have collapsed within a few years. Others have moved back and forth between crisis and post-crisis at a snail's pace. A period of stability without incidents of violence does not automatically indicate a ceased need for UCP. When the stage of crisis passes, there usually is a period of tension, when it is not clear if the 'calm' will be maintained. During this time, UCP personnel can play a critical role, along with UN peacekeeping monitors and peacebuilding efforts, to strengthen the confidence in the peace process and support the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. This is a period when UCP teams might replace armed peacekeepers for a distinct period of time, until UCP organizations also phase out their presence.

Thirdly, UCP methods and principles are increasingly applied beyond the scope of

direct physical protection from imminent threats of violence, for example to increase women's participation in peace processes or strengthen social cohesion and inter-religious dialogue. Having established expansive networks of relationships and trust during periods of war and crisis, UCP agencies are often well-positioned to accompany the difficult transition from war to peace, from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, and from humanitarian crisis to stabilization. This is also a time in which local actors, trained in UCP and in a position to take over the work of external UCP agencies, often move into politics or assume important positions within peace process institutions.

Though determining the right time to exit is difficult, timely implementation of exit strategies is important. Humanitarian organizations in areas of violent conflict at times continue their operations too long. This may lead to an identity crisis within the organization as its mandate and methods no longer suit the context. Lack of morale and loss of reputation are some of the consequences. It may also lead to an unnecessary dependence of local actors on the protection and support of external actors. To avoid such a situation, exit strategies need to have clear objectives that are sustainable and substantive, but also attainable. The objectives need to be formulated in a way that provides clear criteria for the fulfilment of the mandate.

Indicators that may contribute to an exit strategy of external UCP agencies include:

- **Decreased incidents of violence:** a systematic decrease of incidents, obtained through monitoring of trends over a significant period of time, indicates a decreasing need for violence prevention and reduction;
- **Increased safety and security of civilians:** evaluation and context analysis need to be carried out to measure the security situation and the perception of safety among civilians;
- **Increased local initiatives for peace and human rights:** an increase of local initiatives for peace and human rights often indicates that the space for local actors to address safely issues related to conflict and violence has increased;
- **Effective application of UCP by local agencies or groups:** enhancing local capacity in UCP is often part of the overall mission of external UCP agencies;
- **Increased functioning of state structures for civilian protection:** an increase in the effective use of state mechanisms for the protection of human rights indicates a decreasing need for UCP;
- **Changing nature of UCP methods:** a decrease in the number of activities that involves protective presence, accompaniment, and interpositioning and an increase in conflict mitigation, dialogue, and training activities indicates a decreasing need for direct protection;
- **A large presence of internationals:** part of the strength of UCP lies in the presence of internationals (other than armed actors) in isolated areas of violent conflict. A large presence of internationals in conflict-affected areas is often an indicator of increased development and openness and usually results in a loss of added value from UCP agencies.
- **Increased peacebuilding and development activity:** increased peacebuilding activity may be observed in different ways. First, responding to the needs and requests of local actors, UCP teams may increasingly include components of peacebuilding in their work. Second, peacebuilding agencies may increasingly start their operations alongside UCP. This indicates that the transition from peacekeeping

to peacebuilding is well underway and that the need for direct physical protection is decreasing. Although the inclusion of methods that are often associated with peacebuilding (e.g., capacity enhancement, providing space for dialogue, supporting sustainable peace infrastructure) is an important added value of UCP and often reinforces protection strategies, UCP is not intended to be primarily a peacebuilding intervention. When successful, UCP interventions support the transition to situations where protection of civilians is no longer required, even if peacebuilding is still in process.

> *UCP focuses on the primacy of local actors and their needs, and it is sufficiently flexible to move between the different stages of the peace process and address the particular needs of communities. Given these strengths, the use of UCP could be expanded in appropriate contexts and at larger scale to improve the protection of civilians while simultaneously supporting local peacebuilding work. Peacebuilding needs sufficient safety to take hold and peacekeeping needs grounding in local contexts in order to provide that safety and support local peacebuilding.*
>
> *Ellen Furnari, et al., Securing space for local peacebuilding (2015, p.16)*

Exit strategies also need to address how UCP efforts will be sustained by local peace infrastructures following the exit of UCP personnel. In all likelihood, an exit strategy must include capacity enhancement for both local government and civil society actors so that local peace infrastructures will provide effective protection for civilians. Part of the exit work ensures that local efforts are connected to national and international agencies for continued funding and other support, when possible. Including national staff as peacekeepers or in comparable roles can also be regarded as part of the exit strategy.[1] Not only does it make UCP work more effective, it is also one step towards sustainability. Local staff are likely to remain in the country after internationals have gone (Schweitzer, 2012).

Partial success: Between clear-cut success and failure lies a large grey area. Complete success, if such a thing exists when there are so many different variables in play, would coincide with much decreased needs of local actors for UCP. Partial success refers to a situation in which a UCP agency withdraws an operation that is making a positive contribution in some respects, but is being blocked in others. UCP teams may be curtailed by the national government in such ways that the limited positive impacts of their efforts do not justify the continuation of the entire operation. A government may, for example, require an organization to leave the area or make it impossible to function by creating administrative hurdles, such as cancelling visas. These actions could indicate that UCP is having a positive impact and draws attention to the government's own lack of protection of civilians. Or it could indicate a failure of the UCP organization to build and maintain critical relationships. A good exit strategy in the context of partial success or failure will also take into account any risks to local and national staff and to local partners as a result of their employment in the UCP intervention, and will include plans

1 Another part also involves management training so that the local organization can take over the running of an organization. Management training is often a gaping hole in most UCP organizations.

to address this.

Failure: A UCP operation can be considered a failure under the following circumstances:

- UCP personnel repeatedly endanger local actors;
- UCP personnel repeatedly endanger themselves;
- Local actors do not accept UCP agencies;
- UCP does not achieve any of its objectives.

While lack of acceptance and achievement may constitute clear failures of a UCP operation, it is important to understand that these may take significant time to develop. Thus it is important to give an intervention more than a year or even two, before making this determination. Unlike humanitarian aid, many people in communities may not initially see the need or value of UCP.[2]

> *The genocide didn't happen, at least not while I was there. In fact, hardly anything happened at all in Waat [South Sudan]… The village elder I spoke to in my first week gave me a cold stare and said, "You are too late. Our women and children have already died." I decided to walk. Literally. Sometimes I walked for up to 12 hours a day, through water that came up to my chest. We visited remote villages… mostly to gain trust and build relations. When I am disheartened, I remember a recent message I received from a colleague in South Sudan. She told me how much my former South Sudanese team mates have grown since I recruited them in 2012. One of them has just mediated a dispute in his own community... His dream of making a difference for his people came true... Change comes in waves. We need to hold our ground and keep moving!*
>
> *Huibert Oldenhuis, Head of Mission Nonviolent Peaceforce in Myanmar, 2017*

5.4 Development of a comprehensive UCP strategy

2 This statement may appear in contradiction with the earlier statement that community acceptance is a prerequisite for programming. In reality UCP actors are often invited by specific individuals or groups that have witnessed the UCP work elsewhere and believe it can be applied in their own context. The UCP agency may then establish a tentative presence to explore programming and in the process gains acceptance by the broader community. It often takes a few direct interventions before the broader community really understands and embraces the concept of UCP.

Modules 2 and 3 have described UCP principles and methods, and modules 4 and 5 have explained key components of the UCP programming cycle, from the identification of suitable personnel to the formulation of exit strategies. What makes these components "UCP" is their combined application in a situation of violent conflict. In this section some of the main components of UCP are brought together and applied on a case study from South Sudan (Nonviolent Peaceforce n.d.). The first part of the section (4.1) provides a presentation of the case study; the second part (4.2) describes, step by step, how UCP can be applied in this particular situation.

5.4.1
Case study: Mvolo County and Yirol West County reconciliation process, 2011, South Sudan[3]

In Greater Mundri, violence occurs virtually every year during the dry season. It occurs when Dinka cattle keepers from Yirol West County in Lakes State migrate across the border to Mvolo County in Western Equatoria State (WES) to graze their cattle (see figure 3). Because there is insufficient grass and water in Yirol West to keep their cows alive during dry season (approximately December to May), Dinkas move south where there is more grass available. However, as they move south, they cross over into Mvolo County, where Jur farmers reside year-round. According to the Jur, the Dinka and their cattle trespass on their land, destroy their crops, steal their fishnets, and scare away the animals they hunt. However, usually the violence is relatively contained and short-lived, and the Mvolo and Yirol West communities have a history of peaceful coexistence, including shared schooling, health care facilities, and intermarriages.

But 2011 was different. Fighting started abruptly on 9 February after a youth was killed while travelling through Mvolo. Although it was never clear who committed the murder, or what the motives were, a series of retaliatory attacks immediately followed. South Sudan has been at war for most of the past fifty years and only established its independence as a separate country on 9 July 2011. Therefore, its legal structure is still evolving, and often violence remains the reflexive response to any type of conflict. Initially, the Maduynyi Cattle Camp, located in Mvolo, was attacked where the cattle camp members were Dinkas from Yirol West. The fighting at first was restricted to two villages in Mvolo, but it soon spread to affect the entire county and into Yirol West. Youth from both sides were moving along the borders and violently attacking communities from the other side. According to parties on both sides, the conflict escalated far more in 2011 than it had since 2005, when Sudan's civil war ended; the violence was more brutal, it affected a larger geographical area, and it lasted for a longer period of time.

3 See appendix 2 for an alternative case study, Verifying Violence and Cultivating Confidence in Western Mindanao

Large-scale destruction of property and attacks on civilians ensued: between 9 February and 3 April 2011, over 6,000 homes were burned down, over 76,000 people were displaced, dozens of civilians including children were killed or injured, and hundreds of cattle and goats were raided.

Those who were interviewed by UCP team members reported that children were hiding in the bushes, dying from dehydration, meningitis, and attacks by bees. A mission team from the South Sudan Legislative Assembly found that "children, women and elderly were under trees without food, water and health services and there was a high danger of outbreak of disease such as malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea".

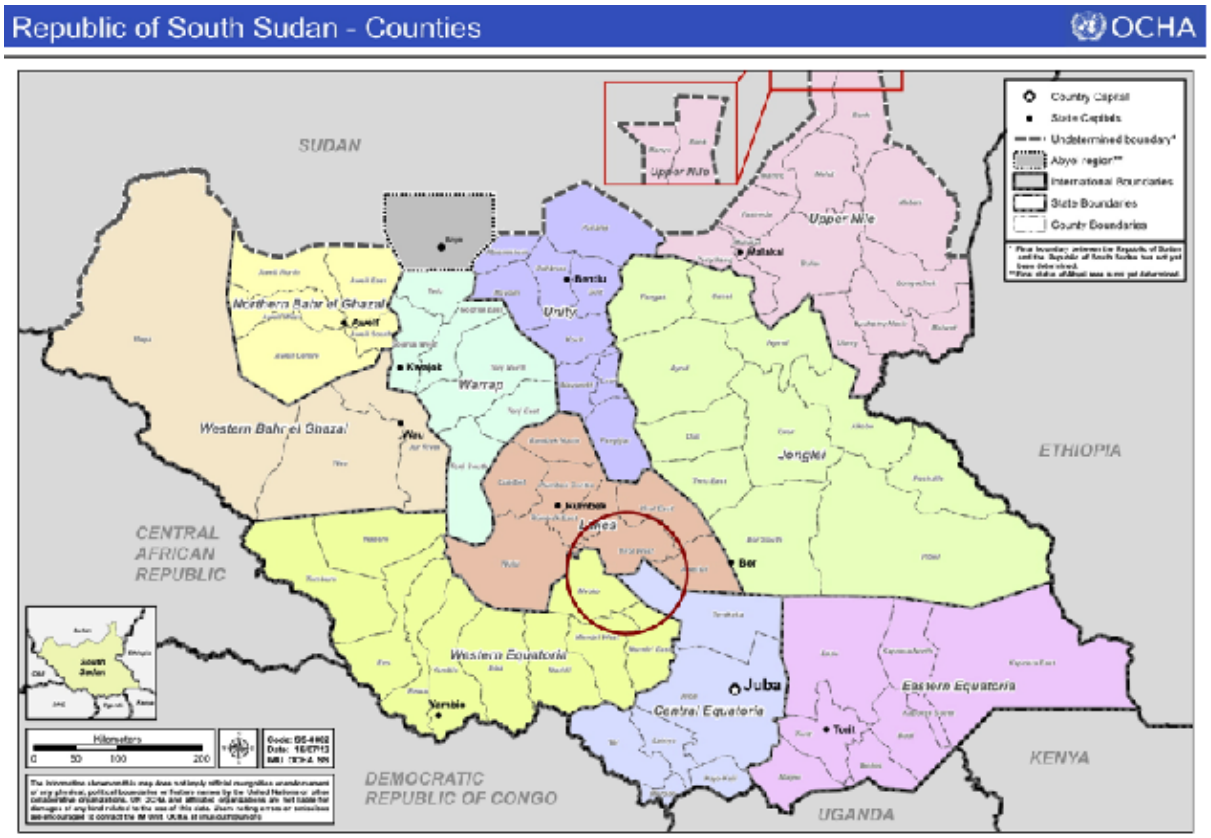

Figure 3, Map of South Sudan: The red circle indicates Mvolo County, Western Equatoria State (yellow area) and Yirol West County, Lakes State (orange area)

5.4.2
Development of a comprehensive strategy to provide UCP in Mvolo County and Yirol West County

In the following strategy outline, it is assumed that a UCP agency had a long-term presence in Greater Mundri at the time this series of incidents occurred. The outline is written from the perspective of UCP personnel residing in Western Equatoria State at the time of 9 February 2011 when violence started abruptly.

CONFLICT ANALYSIS

As UCP personnel have been present in the area of Greater Mundri for a long time, an in-depth conflict analysis may have already been done. They are familiar with the conflict between the Dinka and the Jur, as violence occurs every year during the dry season. Nevertheless, they will engage in a limited conflict analysis. As mentioned in the case study, in 2011 the situation is different from previous years. The unusual scale of the violence is a good reason for reviewing conflict analysis.

UCP team members may first of all try to gather information from as many sources as possible at their base in Western Equatoria. They may try to analyse the conflict from different angles, including national politics, social relationships, culture, religion and geography. The relationship between the Dinka and the Jur communities is a key component to be analysed. As mentioned in the case study presentation, there is a history of peaceful co-existence. Team members may question if recent developments have caused a strain on this relationship and if there are other signs that indicate a breakdown in ties between the two communities. Other aspects of thematic analysis include the existence and functioning of conflict resolution mechanisms, as well as possible changes in the environment that may have further increased the scarcity of grazing areas. While the conflict presents itself as an inter-communal conflict, it occurred across a state border, so there could also be a political aspect to the conflict. Therefore, UCP personnel may want to assess the relationship between the different states. This information will not only support the analysis, but can be used later on, when state authorities may need to be involved in addressing the situation.

UCP team members may strengthen their thematic analysis by assessing the attitudes and behaviour of different groups. This would include, first of all, the youth, as they are prominently involved in the conflict, but it should include also other groups such as community elders and women. These groups may have different attitudes towards the conflict and could be encouraged to take a leadership role in promoting peace. An analysis of connectors and dividers may also be insightful. Shared hospitals, schools, and inter-marriages have connected the two communities in the past and could be used to reconnect them in the future. The difference in identity between the Jur farmers and

Dinka cattle keepers is clearly a divider, though the scarcity of natural resources seems to be the main cause of the conflict. However, as cattle keepers, the Dinka clearly view these natural resources differently from the Jur, and this intensifies the conflict. Though the ethnic differences between the Dinka and Jur do not seem to be an issue at the moment, it could become a main driver if the conflict were to intensify or expand.

When the UCP team has collected sufficient information about the conflict, they will try to integrate the different aspects of the conflict and draw conclusions. They may create a conflict map that shows the different parties and their relationships to the targeted areas. They may also draw a time-line of events to see how the conflict has progressed since the killing of the youth on 9 February. Furthermore, they need to find out if the local government, police, or chiefs have intervened and how widely the fighting youth are supported by the rest of the communities.

UCP team members may conclude that there are a number of entry points for UCP to prevent or reduce violence and provide protection in this situation. Many civilians have been displaced and may fear additional violence. If other service providers are present at all they may also fear for their safety, especially local service providers. Local authorities and segments of the affected communities most likely do not support the violence, though it is important to determine their attitude toward it. In fact, they may wish to intervene before the conflict expands in order to bring the two communities together as soon as possible. As most of them are directly or indirectly affiliated with one or another of the communities, potential peacemakers may fear being targeted if they take active roles. They may welcome the presence of a nonpartisan third party at their side.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As soon as UCP personnel receive word of the first incident they will contact local partners and contacts in the area to gather information (pre-assessment). As the needs assessment coincides with a specific incident, information gathering for conflict analysis and needs assessment partly overlaps. UCP networks may already include actors from the affected areas; if not, local partners will be able to facilitate these relationships. Local contacts in affected communities may not only have more details about the situation, they will also be able to assess if it is appropriate for UCP personnel to become involved. UCP team members will approach local authorities for the same reasons. Moreover, they may ask them what local authorities in the affected areas have already done to respond to the crisis. They will also contact other service providers in the area. Since reports about casualties and displacement will have circulated quickly, other service providers may be planning a rapid response assessment and may be interested in teaming up.

Following initial information gathering and an affirmative response from local actors to their possible involvement, the UCP team may plan a rapid response needs assessment. Ideally this assessment is conducted in collaboration with other service providers. As early reports may already have indicated the need for food and other supplies, a collaborative needs assessment would identify and/or address various needs as quickly as possible. The communication network in rural areas may be limited, which could hinder the exchange of information. This makes it even more important for UCP personnel to travel in person to the area to gather information and assess the needs from a variety of

perspectives. As the incidents have taken place during the dry season, the roads will be accessible by car, though affected areas may still be hard to reach.

Team members will have to determine the location of the needs assessment prior to departure. Because the attacks started at the Maduynyi Cattle Camp and two villages in Mvolo, this would be a likely place to start. They may also try to identify the exact place were the youth was killed on 9 February and engage with the community there to find out what happened. The most urgent issue, however, is to locate the displaced people. As mentioned in the case study, 6,000 homes have been burned down, over 76,000 people have been displaced, dozens of civilians including children have been killed or injured, and hundreds of cattle and goats have been raided. Moreover, children are hiding in the bushes, dying from various diseases. Children, women, and elderly people have also been found without food, water, and health services. Once these vulnerable people are located, UCP personnel will need to engage with them to assess their needs. Based on the reports, there seems to be a need for food, water, shelter, medical treatment, and safety. There may also be children who have lost their parents in the attacks or were separated from their families during their flight. As livestock has been raided, many people have lost their source of income.

The UCP team will not only engage with vulnerable populations, but also with local authorities, community leaders, and civil society organizations. They will need to engage with these actors to build trust, increase their understanding of the conflict, and assess the needs of these actors. These are important actors as they may be the drivers of change, as well as potential partners. Team members will explore with them how UCP may be of service to the communities in reducing violence and protecting civilians.

In conducting the needs assessment, UCP personnel have to make sure they engage with both sides of the conflict, even if most of the urgent protection needs are identified on one side. They have to demonstrate that they are nonpartisan and advocate for the safety and security of civilians rather than favouring a particular outcome to the conflict. Furthermore, they need to engage with the authorities at the county and state levels in both Lakes State and Western Equatoria State to make sure that the presence of UCP personnel is explained and supported. This would also ensure that emergency response action by various actors is coordinated and streamlined.

CONTEXT AND SECURITY ANALYSIS

Context analysis in this situation will take place during the needs assessment and during any follow-up missions to the affected areas. However, an assessment of the security situation both on the roads and at the location of the needs assessment will need to be conducted prior to departure. If the conditions are not deemed sufficiently safe, the needs assessment cannot take place. In this particular situation, there is no indication that external actors are targeted. The youth involved in the fighting seem to have moved to the border areas between the states to confront each other. Moreover, the displaced people will have moved to safer areas where UCP personnel can assess their needs. Accessibility of the area needs to be assessed prior to departure. The affected areas may be located in remote areas that are difficult to reach by road and perhaps impossible to reach by phone. Local authorities, police, and partners will be key sources of information

in regard to security and accessibility. Satellite phones are going to be indispensable.

During their journey and on location, UCP team members will try to observe and analyse the situation. Are people armed? Who are they? What weapons are they using? What is the ratio of women to men among the displaced people? Are particular groups targeted? Are they fearful? Are they injured? Are they willing to talk to UCP personnel? Where do they come from and where do they go? Team members will try to answer these questions and ask similar questions again on their following visits. This will help them to detect trends and changes in the situation and anticipate additional crises. One of the impending crises in this situation could come in the form of food insecurity. If a settlement of the conflict is not reached by the beginning of the rainy season, the displaced people may not be able to return to their homes. This means that they cannot start cultivating their crops and will risk having no food for the rest of the year, which could increase tension and spark more conflict.

Part of the context analysis is focused on the position of UCP in the conflict. As the UCP organization has a base in Western Equatoria, but not in Lakes State, it could be perceived to be on the side of the Mvolo community. Most of the UCP activities will have been conducted among the Mvolo community and their relationships with the Mvolo community may be stronger as a result of this. The UCP team can reduce this vulnerability by building relationships with key actors on all levels in Lakes State as well as with the community in Yirol West. Other vulnerabilities of UCP personnel may be identified as well. Criminal actors may take advantage of the chaos and pose threats. These actors may not target UCP practitioners, but precautionary measures have to taken to avoid being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

IDENTIFICATION OF POPULATIONS TO BE SERVED

The first population to be served will be the displaced people. They are in urgent need of help. UCP personnel may be able to support the displaced people in increasing their safety and security. They will not be able to address many of the needs of the displaced people directly as many of these needs involve material aid, but they can engage other service providers who may be able to address material needs.

Other populations to be served are the wider communities of Mvolo and Yirol West. UCP team members may support them in reducing and preventing violence as well as increasing their safety and security. They may also strengthen local peace infrastructures in the two communities in their efforts to resolve the conflict and build peace. Though the displaced people come from these same communities, they are considered a specific target group with distinct needs.

A third population to be served consists of individuals and groups who will take a leadership role in addressing the crisis situation and/or resolving the conflict. These actors may be local peacemakers from one of the two communities, but it may also be representatives from a national mediation NGO located in the capital city. The UCP team may support these actors in addressing the situation.

IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL PARTNERS

UCP organizations often do not have to look for local partners. During the needs assessment they will engage with a wide range of actors about the situation and the potential role of UCP in the situation. A partnership may fall into place during one of these encounters. The national mediation NGO, for example, is an obvious choice for a partnership. They may have been approached by local authorities or community leaders and have come down to the area to do their own assessment. There may also be local relief and development agencies in the affected area that have assumed a leadership role in the crisis and approached UCP personnel during their needs assessment. Additionally, local community leaders such as tribal elders may offer to partner once they have met and feel confidence in the potential UCP intervention.

Though teaming up with civil society organizations is usually the easiest and most frequently used form of partnerships, in this particular situation there may not be any organized civil society organizations in the area. Therefore, the establishment of ongoing working relationships with the local government, informal structures or with community leaders would be the most obvious strategy here.

UCP SKILLS AND METHODS

The use of UCP methods depends very much on the expressed needs and interests of the populations served, as well as the recommendations of local partners. Asking the right questions and active listening are key skills in drawing out these needs and interests. The following text describes how UCP team members of Nonviolent Peaceforce applied a variety of skills and methods in this particular situation.

As the only civilian protection agency working in the area, Nonviolent Peaceforce became involved from the early days of this conflict.[4] Their team members, initially four internationals and six nationals, utilized various strategies to increase the security of civilians affected by the fighting and to support the development of a sustainable peace agreement. Working together with local government authorities, they were able to locate many of the civilians who had been displaced by the fighting. UCP teams played a key role in linking humanitarian service providers with the populations in need. They alerted their partners, participated in interagency assessments of internal displacement, and advocated for humanitarian agencies to provide emergency support, while developing strategies to mitigate the violence.

Because Nonviolent Peaceforce had an office in Western Equatoria State, but not in Lakes States, they had to ensure that both sides of the conflict perceived them as a trusted and nonpartisan actor. Therefore, the team members undertook several trips to Lakes State, where they began to build relationships with communities and government officials. This laid the groundwork for later UCP interventions. By May they had established trust with community leaders, chiefs, elders, youth, police, government, and military on both sides. They also gained a comprehensive understanding of the conflict dynamics and needs of all parties involved.

4 This project was funded by the Belgium Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Developing relationships on both sides of the conflict was crucial, but they also needed to identify key actors on all levels of the conflict. The strategic first step was spending time visiting the affected communities and local government officials, such as the district commissioners and village administrators. UCP team members worked together with partners such as the Mundri Relief and Development Association (MRDA). They coordinated and participated in the three Peace Conferences that MRDA held in April, July, and September. They also provided a constant protective presence within the affected communities. Following these initial efforts, UCP team members travelled to the state capitals of Western Equatoria and Lakes State to meet with the governors and ministers. The governors of both states were involved in the project at the state level, but were not involved in the detailed engagements at the community level. While team members in the field engaged with the authorities at the state level, others in the capital city met with members of the national legislative assembly to gain support from high-level government officials.

As the project developed, the Nonviolent Peaceforce team also ended up working closely together with a unit of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), called the Joint Integrated Unit (JIU). The JIU, deployed to the area to bring the situation under control, had a difficult time engaging with the various parties as they were sent out to cover two states with one vehicle and no communication equipment. Nevertheless, according to the UCP team members, the JIU turned out to be a very helpful partner. "…they were one of the most genuine group of soldiers we had ever worked with and they were eager to be agents of peace…" (Easthom, n.d.).

At the beginning of May 2011, UCP personnel learned of an initiative coming from the chiefs on each side to meet. On three occasions meetings were scheduled, but all failed. On 25 May two UCP teams travelled along the borders of Mvolo and Yirol West to meet with a number of key actors. These actors included local government officials, chiefs, elders, youth, as well as the recently deployed Joint Integrated Unit forces. The UCP team members inquired why the scheduled meetings were cancelled. The local government and chiefs told them that the community members feared traveling to each other's side of the border to meet. Two days later UCP personnel coordinated with the Joint Integrated Unit and the local government to hold the first peace talks. UCP team members accompanied chiefs and local leaders from Kokori to Mapourdit, two of the most affected areas, to meet. They provided proactive presence throughout the meeting. This was the first time since the start of the conflict in February that chiefs crossed the border from one side to the other.

The dialogue was remarkably successful. Peace and freedom of movement were officially declared between the communities of Kokori and Mapourdit. Furthermore, concrete measures were established to improve the situation for civilians affected by the conflict and to strengthen the relationships between the two communities. For example, both sides agreed that the main hospital would be reopening with immediate effect to provide medical care to the sick and injured people from Mvolo. These patients had been too afraid to travel into Mapourdit since February. Schools located in Lakes State, which had provided educations to residents from both Yirol West and Mvolo, re-opened. Chiefs encouraged their displaced communities to return home. Furthermore, a structure of accountability between the youths, chiefs, and local government was agreed upon to strengthen the peace process. Any breaches of the agreement were to be reported to the

Joint Integrated Unit forces.

Despite the significant progress, more dialogue was necessary. In order to sustain and further strengthen the peace process, chiefs from other affected areas, as well as the two most respected leaders in Yirol West and Mvolo would need to participate and buy in to the peace agreements. UCP teams organized and accompanied a convoy of four vehicles to carry the chiefs, elders, and youth from Mvolo to Yirol West to the second round of peace talks on 7 June.

The second round of peace talks was emotional and intense. Chiefs on both sides expressed a strong desire to restore peace. As a result of the talks, peace and freedom of movement were officially declared between all communities along the border. IDPs were encouraged to return home and begin their cultivation. The chiefs also agreed to meet again to draft guidelines on how the different communities would interact. This involved cattle-keepers obtaining and carrying letters of permission from local government officials whenever they entered other villages. Finally, on 10 June 2011 UCP team members accompanied chiefs from Yirol West into Mvolo to a special ceremony and monitored the meeting as all participating chiefs signed the peace agreement.

Evidence of the success of the ceasefire agreement was already apparent the day following the first meeting on May 27 when UCP personnel observed nurses returning to the hospital to resume their work. The ceasefire agreement also included provisions to allow IDPs to safely return home without the threat of further violence. In the days following the first peace talks, UCP personnel observed small groups of men returning to the deserted communities to begin cultivation, and by the end of the second peace talks, families were observed walking home with their belongings. The chiefs from the border communities estimated that approximately half of their people returned in those days.

Following the peace agreement UCP team members worked together with the two communities to monitor its implementation. On 22 June the peace process faced its first challenge. There was news that five unidentified youth went looking for their cattle that had been stolen in the first major incident on 9 February in Mvolo area. Once the youth realized there were no cattle in the area for them to reclaim they killed five people. The investigator for the South Sudan Police Service in Greater Mundri immediately led an investigation team to collect information, informing the local community not to take the law into their own hands. UCP personnel arrived on 23 June and stayed until 25 June to meet with authorities and community leaders. There was an enormous sense of frustration and anger among community members in Mvolo. They felt the other side was not keeping their part to the peace agreement.

Although there were communication channels between the two sides, the relationship was still weak. Moreover, the chiefs did not know whom to contact to find out why they had been attacked. Because the UCP teams had built relationships with both sides, they travelled into Yirol West to meet with community leaders and authorities to gather information. From 27 to 30 June a UCP team was deployed to first meet with the Mvolo side again, before going to Yirol West. This visit was simply made to advise the community in Mvolo about the trip they were undertaking to Yirol West. It made the affected communities aware about the movements of UCP personnel in the area. In Yirol West, UCP team members quickly found out that the communities of Yirol West

were appalled by the incident. The administrator of Mapourdit as well as the head chief both sent letters of condolence to the communities in Mvolo and informed them that they had nothing to do with the attack.

When the perpetrators were apprehended, UCP personnel visited them in prison. They also engaged with the leaders of the community to which the perpetrators belonged. This community feared revenge attacks and made a real effort to explain that the community did not support these criminal acts. They also wrote letters to the communities of Mvolo to express their condolences. UCP team members traveled back to Mvolo to share the information they had obtained on their trip to Yirol West. This helped to ease tensions in Mvolo and the leaders of the affected areas in Mvolo expressed their willingness to re-engage with the other side to further increase the relationship and prevent similar incidents in the future.

In all of these efforts UCP personnel tried to identify the actors most committed to the peace process. They encouraged these actors to influence those who were losing confidence in the process in order to avoid a re-escalation of the conflict. UCP teams continued for a long time to provide follow-up support to these communities. They visited tribal chiefs to ensure that information of the ceasefire had been properly disseminated and planned a follow-up conference to ensure buy-in from all tribal chiefs. They also provided accompaniment for returning IDPs to the affected areas. Finally, UCP personnel supported the leadership from both communities to document their resolutions and to formulate mutually agreed codes of conduct. This would guide communities through difficult issues such as cattle movement and the use of land. In September 2011 the chiefs on each side signed a Memorandum of Understanding that consolidated all the agreements.

> *There have been no conflicts since September. Usually the conflicts are in the dry season between September and April. This has been a 100% success. I give the credit to Nonviolent Peaceforce.*
>
> *Sapana Abuyi, Deputy Governor Western Equatoria State in South Sudan, 2012*

Though South Sudan descended into civil war in December 2013, large-scale violence between the Jur farmers and the Dinka cattle keepers in Mvolo County and Yirol West County has not yet repeated itself. There have been a couple of minor incidents in the area, but no deaths have been reported since the September agreement. The effects of the civil war have been felt in the area and increased all sorts of tensions, but the local government has reportedly been effective in diffusing major tensions that could lead to a resurfacing of the conflict between the farmers and the cattle keepers. Nonviolent Peaceforce has continued to monitor the situation and occasionally sent a UCP team to the area to conduct community dialogues and support affected populations to explore their options. These teams observed that local communities have been proactive in solving conflicts nonviolently and appeared strongly committed to prevent new outbreaks of violence.

EXIT STRATEGY

Throughout the peace process, stakeholders repeatedly shared with UCP personnel that they felt they needed to learn how to deal with conflicts without violence. Over time, traditional nonviolent conflict resolution practices had been eroded and the communities wanted to learn new processes as well as reinvigorate traditions. As a component of conflict prevention, Nonviolent Peaceforce therefore developed a capacity enhancement programme for the two communities. This programme was designed to increase the skills and the confidence of community members to engage in nonviolent conflict resolution and develop unarmed community protection mechanisms. A training-of-trainers was provided as a conclusion to the capacity development programme, allowing local actors to continue to train more people. As a follow-up to the capacity development programme, UCP personnel worked together with the two communities to develop their Early Warning Early Response (EWER) capacities.

The capacity development programme and the establishment of community-based EWER systems can be seen as part of an exit strategy. The capacity development programme helped to increase the confidence and capability of local actors to take over the role of UCP teams in the process as well as to develop the capacity and confidence of others. The development of EWER systems strengthened UCP infrastructures in the area, which communities could use to prevent and reduce violence in the following years.

The case study shows that many of the UCP methods presented in module 3 were used over the course of this particular conflict. Some of these methods could have been applied more extensively, in different ways, or at different stages of the conflict. Additional methods like interpositioning could have been applied as well. However, the choice of methods and their particular application in a particular situation depends very much on specific developments in the conflict, as well as the initiatives of local actors. The moment community leaders initiated peace talks or peace conferences, UCP team members responded to these initiatives and adapted their strategy to support them. It clearly shows that local actors are the main actors in the peace process, while UCP personnel create the space for these processes to take place, nurture the processes, and ensure they are followed through, despite many obstacles. In doing these activities, UCP teams not only accompanied individuals but also accompanied the process.

The case study only describes a few obstacles. There were many more. Reducing violence, protecting civilians, and supporting a sustainable resolution to this conflict required NP to engage in 115 separate interventions between February and September 2011. It shows that UCP requires sustained effort over a long period of time. It also shows that a peace agreement may only be the beginning of a much longer peace process. The investment in direct attention and presence in the community yields real rewards, in the gradual restoration of safer communities.

5.5
Dilemmas

During the implementation of UCP in situations of violent conflict, throughout the UCP programming cycle, a variety of dilemmas can arise. UCP actors, along with their local partners, may have to make difficult choices between two or more alternatives that are equally undesirable or that may lead to undesirable consequences, or where they feel external pressure from donors or governments, for example. A lot of these dilemmas are caused by the tensions that arise between the various key principles and key sources of guidance when they are applied to a specific context, or by the realities of conditions on the ground.

The following sections provide a number of dilemmas that UCP practitioners may face.

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND NONVIOLENCE VERSUS THE PRIMACY OF LOCAL ACTORS

UCP teams may find themselves in situations where the civilians they protect or the actors they team up with engage in actions that seem to go against UCP principles. They may for example find a weapon on a human rights defender they are about to accompany, even though the organization that person represents espouses nonviolence. The principles of the primacy of local actors and nonpartisanship require UCP practitioners not to interfere in the affairs of local actors. At the same time, the principle of nonviolence tells them not to support or be associated with armed struggle. This can be a dilemma.

Though UCP practitioners refrain from imposing their views on local actors, it does not mean they have to support violent attitudes or behaviour. In regards to the abovementioned example, they may engage the human rights defender in a dialogue about the use of weapons, the perception that carrying a weapon creates, and its impact on the work of the organization. Furthermore, they may offer the defender the possibility to proceed with the accompaniment if he or she decides to go unarmed, all the while clearly explaining that ultimately it is the choice of the defender to decide on the desired course of action.

BEING RESPONSIVE VERSUS PRIMACY OF LOCAL ACTORS

In certain isolated areas of violent conflict, UCP teams may be the only service providers present. Though the levels of violence are high and protection needs many, state structures may be limited and organized civil society non-existent. Interest in UCP services may be apparent, though it is not articulated or formulated into official requests. This situation prompts UCP personnel to take a more active role in the prevention of violence and the protection of civilians. If the primacy of local actors is too strictly adhered to, there is a risk of stagnation. UCP teams will be perceived as not responsive to the urgent needs and may even risk further disempowering an already disempowered community. Though

traditional mechanisms can be identified (they exist in every situation) and capacity can be enhanced, UCP organizations will have to exercise a greater degree of leadership for a time in these contexts.

In determining the boundaries of their more active involvement, UCP personnel need to consider the danger of interfering in local affairs, in particular being sensitive to the different perspectives and complexities of contradictions within local communities. They also need to take to consider overreaching their professional capacity. The lack of basic support services and expert service providers may prompt them to be responsive and support affected communities wherever they can ("if we don't do anything, no one else will"). This may be appropriate in some cases, but not in other cases. Providing trauma counselling to survivors of sexual violence without appropriate skills may not only be unprofessional, but it may even cause harm. Even the act of simply opening a space to talk about sexual violence, without providing any access to psychosocial and medical support services, may have a negative impact. It may encourage women to come forward and address these issues in their community, while UCP teams do not have access to the necessary support services to back them up. This does not mean sending away a survivor of sexual violence that knocks on your door, just because you are not specifically trained to deal with GBV issues, and you are afraid to do harm. It simply means being aware of your own professional capacity and managing expectations.

Another issue related to the dilemma of being responsive, while maintaining the primacy of local actors, is immediate conflict intervention. Perceived as expert peace workers, UCP personnel are often approached by local actors independent of an EWER system to solve urgent conflicts in the community or interposition themselves in a fight. Not only is such an active role in many cases interfering with the principle of the primacy of local actors (i.e., local police, elders, or others who might be asked), it may also interfere with being nonpartisan. Moreover, it is often a security risk. UCP protection methods are mainly preventive, and interpositioning is only undertaken after very careful preparation and risk assessment. It would be more appropriate if local actors would intervene in the conflict themselves, while UCP teams provide a protective presence. In another example, UCP organizations may be asked to provide training or other forms of capacity enhancement that could be provided by or at least include local actors in leadership. Community people may prefer the 'outside experts' and request just UCP support, but care must be taken not to undermine the position of local expertise.

PREVENTING VIOLENCE VERSUS PROMOTING CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Prevention of violence is a key objective of UCP. De-escalating tensions is one method that UCP practitioners use to prevent violence. De-escalating tensions at the stage of confrontation may prevent violence, but it may also reaffirm an unjust status quo (structural violence) and prevent the transformation of conflict. Oppressed groups may have accepted an unjust status quo for a long time, but at some point feel sufficiently confident and emboldened to confront their oppressors. Confrontation in this case is a sign that the balance of power is shifting. It may eventually lead to a more just status quo. At this stage the injustices need to be made visible in order for negotiations to take place and change to occur. Civil society advocates may push for a re-balancing of power. They may amplify the voice of the oppressed, legitimize their concerns and aspirations,

and undermine the legitimacy, authority, and power of those who rule over them. The confrontation may be addressed through either violent struggle or active nonviolence, or a combination of both.

UCP methods such as accompaniment, proactive presence, capacity development, and confidence-building may be partly responsible for the initiatives of local actors in challenging the unjust status quo. Guided by the principles of nonviolence and of International Human Rights Law, UCP practitioners may encourage this process, as long as the confrontation is addressed through nonviolence. As nonpartisan actors, though, they must refrain from taking the side of those driving the process. This is a subtle difference that can be extremely challenging for individual UCP practitioners, who may have joined the UCP agency out of their commitment to social justice. In case of a vertical conflict, in which the government is maintaining the unjust status quo, UCP personnel are easily perceived as interfering with state sovereignty. They may be perceived as taking the side of 'trouble makers' and 'actively promoting conflict'. If the confrontation becomes violent, the government may even blame UCP teams for actively promoting violence. Under these circumstances it is of the utmost importance that UCP team members maintain a strict discipline in adhering to nonpartisanship, nonviolence, and the primacy of local actors. One step out of line may give the government the justification to shut down the entire UCP operation and expel the international UCP personnel.

MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS VERSUS CHALLENGING AUTHORITIES TO UPHOLD AND PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS

As has been explained in earlier sections of this narrative, UCP actors aim to build and maintain close relationships with authorities that they can leverage for the sake of providing protection. Good relationships may also allow UCP actors to maintain their presence in the country or gain access to restricted conflict-affected areas. From this perspective, the extension of visas, access to restricted areas, or invitations to participate in formal ceasefire bodies can be seen as indicators of success, while lack of access, hostile remarks, and expulsion as indicators of failure. Negative reactions, however, do not necessary imply lack of impact, sometimes it is quite the contrary. The mistake organizations sometimes make is to conclude that if government authorities get angry it must mean the organization has made a mistake or 'gone too far' (Mahoney 2018, p.28). While this may be the case, it may also be that the organization has put the finger exactly where it hurts and that the response of the government is a deliberate tactic to dissuade the organization from repeating such behaviour.

UCP is usually provided as a response to poor application of the rule of law. Uncomfortable encounters with authorities are bound to happen. UCP actors need to be willing to step into, even get comfortable with, a space of discomfort. At best, they try to remain right on the razor's edge, continuously leaning deeper into discomfort, but never overstretching, and swiftly pulling back or sideways when required. If strings on a musical instrument are too tight, they break. If they are tuned too loose, no sound will come out. As political circumstances continuously change, UCP agencies do well to regularly ask themselves whether their strings are too loose or too tight, if they do enough to challenge the injustice and marginalization they witness. As Liam Mahony

writes, "peacebuilding efforts that tacitly accept discrimination and segregation as an unchangeable given ('politically unfeasible to confront') are likely to strengthen the discriminatory structures and patterns they don't explicitly try to change." (Mahony 2018, p.19)

USING PRIVILEGE VERSUS NONVIOLENCE

Some UCP practitioners make use of the special status (often based on race, nationality or ethnicity) that a foreigner is given in many places around the world, in order to provide protection. Even many of those deemed to be ruthless killers may abide by etiquettes of hospitality and civility. UCP personnel are often perceived as "guests". The Swahili phrase "when the guest arrives, the host desists" succinctly states the pattern.[5] UCP teams "use the psychological force of the universal inclination to hospitality to prevent their 'hosts' from losing this esteem. Granted, this is a subtle 'force', but no less real. It exists only through face-to-face presence of 'guests', especially guests from places most distant…" (Grant 2008).

Using the visibility and the privilege accorded to them as internationals to their advantage has been an important instrument of UCP protection strategies. It may have enabled them to pass through checkpoints, and given them access to military camps or to authorities who are reluctant to meet local actors from particular ethnic groups or classes. This, however, can be a dangerous use of privilege. It can reinforce the existing oppressive order and may contribute to preventing the population from standing up for their rights. In that way, UCP presence can contribute to a culture in which the state is not held accountable for the continuation of a discriminatory status quo. UCP organizations usually counter this by enhancing the capacity and confidence of oppressed minority groups and facilitating dialogue between minority groups and other groups, including state actors. Some UCP organizations specifically include training on anti-racism and consider de-colonizing their work to be a significant and ongoing practice (see Paynesville good practices report, 2020)

The issue of race is a particularly delicate issue that has not been explored or acknowledged sufficiently within many UCP organizations.[6] While the power that a foreign passport brings to an isolated conflict area applies to all foreigners, regardless of race, white skin and European descent has undoubtedly played (and still plays) a significant part in creating the desired deterrence effect. In fact, various local (slang) languages equate the word 'foreigner' with 'white person'. UCP actors have frequently experienced that local actors have been more open to meeting with or listening to white people, men in particular, than people of colour. At the same time, international UCP staff of colour, from the Global South, have been effective in UCP work in contexts as diverse as South Sudan, the South Caucasus, and the Philippines. Moreover, they have at times managed to connect faster with local actors through (perceived) shared experiences of war and poverty. The dynamics of race and global status and related disparities of power may also play out within organizations and need careful attention. This is particularly important

5 The aphorism refers to a husband and wife who must stop arguing because a guest has arrived.

6 See Sara Koopman "Making space for peace: international protective accompaniment in Colombia" for in depth discussion, and CPT website

for UCP teams residing in conflict-affected areas. When white team leaders are always seen to make the decisions, it reinforces racial prejudice and misses opportunities for communities to reflect on their own diversity.

> *Yes, UCP may use white privilege to its advantage and risks reinforcing it, but its methods and principles also enable people to reflect on the issue of race. The state governor may only want to talk to my white colleague rather than to me, a woman of colour, and we may both let that be in order to gain the leverage we need to protect civilians. But then we go back home and we talk about it as a team, because it is an aspect of UCP to look at these issues and a concern of all of us to build on, empowering both the members of the team and the communities we work with.*
>
> *Rosemary Kabaki, Head of Mission, Nonviolent Peaceforce in Myanmar, 2020.*

BUILDING CONFIDENCE VERSUS PROTECTION

Building confidence usually empowers people, but if it is not handled correctly it can also disempower people. In a situation of violent conflict it can even put people at risk. If confidence building is not linked to a real improvement in security, it could encourage excessive risk-taking. Conversely, when training becomes teaching people what to do or ignores local wisdom it can reinforce dependency on external experts and decrease confidence.

The East Timor experience is an example of high-stakes encouragement. The presence of UN peacekeepers in East Timor encouraged full popular participation in the ballot that led to independence. It enabled Timorese political organizations to feel that they, in turn, could encourage popular participation. As violence and threats mounted, the UN mission promised, 'We will not leave.' But it was a promise that the UN mission could not keep; as security conditions deteriorated drastically, the mission reached a point where it felt that its protective impact was not significant enough to justify the risk to its staff. The mission first pulled out of all the provinces, and then held on in Dili until a military intervention was mandated (and until it could evacuate the national staff and IDPs hiding in its compound). In this case the policy of encouragement—firmly supported by the leadership of Timorese civil society—may have increased civilian vulnerability to subsequent massacres (Mahony, 2006, p.77).

SELF PROTECTION VERSUS PROTECTING OTHERS

> *The strategy of stopping a bullet only works once.*
>
> *Tiffany Easthom, former Head of Mission of Nonviolent Peaceforce in South Sudan*

Increasing the safety and security of threatened civilians is one of the highest priorities

in UCP, but it is never done at the expense of the safety of UCP personnel. They are not asked to sacrifice themselves to save others. The basic rationale behind this is a pragmatic choice: UCP practitioners cannot protect if they get shot. Furthermore, the death of a UCP practitioner will have a negative impact on the capacity of UCP to provide protection. Even if vulnerable civilians are under immediate threat, UCP teams may have to seek cover instead of advance and protect. As has been mentioned before, UCP is a preventive strategy, not a defensive one. It is something all UCP practitioners know, but in a situation of immediate threat, it is not always easy to apply. Moreover, it is often not easy to determine the severity of a threat.

Most UCP agencies have strict security protocols in place to prevent such occurrences. Evacuation of UCP personnel is often a decision taken by a country director or a designated committee, and it does not allow individual team members the option to stay behind and protect civilians. Even a consensus-based organization like Peace Brigades International has exceptional mechanisms in place: a particular body is provided with the authority to make a unilateral decision on the evacuation of UCP personnel in emergency situations. Risk assessments and context analysis are continually carried out to evaluate the security situation. UCP teams also rely heavily on their extensive network of relationships, especially local partners, but also diplomatic and NGO communities. In a very real way, they are being protected by those they have come to protect. For instance, when a UCP team member of Nonviolent Peaceforce was kidnapped in Mindanao in 2009, local civil society groups held public demonstrations demanding his release[7].

IMMEDIATE NEEDS VERSUS SUSTAINABLE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

UCP practitioners in the field are frequently confronted with a dilemma between reacting to current needs versus developing and implementing plans towards more sustainable changes. Parents may approach UCP personnel requesting support for the return of their children from armed groups, IDPs may need help negotiating with other agencies and the government, a crisis flares and specific communities may need proactive presence. These activities can consume all available resources and push to the background previously planned activities such as supporting the development of a community network or establishing a local protection team. The pressures of daily work and the need to react to immediate needs are often seen as being in contradiction with the need to take time to update context analysis, make a work plan, or to reflect together on the work. This can be understood as a dilemma between the immediacy of the need to uphold the humanitarian imperative (i.e. the obligation of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed) versus the need to develop local capacities and to do so sustainably. Both positions can claim to give primacy to local actors.

One can even think of this as a dilemma regarding UCP practitioners being nonviolent toward themselves versus responding to the context at hand. Thomas Merton noted that: "There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away

7 The person in question was released soon after.

by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful." (Merton, 1977)

These are just a few of the many dilemmas which UCP practitioners face. There are no simple formulas to guide decision making in these cases. They present what can be termed "wicked problems". UCP practitioners must rely on a strong grounding in the principles and practices of UCP, a strong team that can discuss the specifics of the situation and help each other make good decisions, and the humility to acknowledge mistakes and change course.

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