

## Action Sheet 3

# Life, Safety and Security



### Key message

Internally displaced persons and communities can face a range of serious threats to their life, safety and security at every stage of the displacement cycle. Such threats can stem from a variety of sources and include diverse actors depending on the context. It is primarily the role of the national authorities to provide protection against such threats and ensure that acts of crime, violence and abuse do not take place in a climate of impunity.

Human rights and humanitarian actors rarely have the mandate, the capacity or the resources to physically protect displaced individuals and communities from such threats. We can however contribute to their protection by helping to reduce their exposure to and mitigate the devastating effects of such violence whenever possible.

This Action Sheet, should be read together with Action Sheets V.4 on Gender-Based Violence and V.5 on children associated with armed forces and groups. It tries to provide guidance on ways to address three distinct but interrelated threats to life, safety and security:

- Threats resulting from a **breakdown of law and order**, including individual or collective acts of crime, violence and abuse.<sup>1</sup>
- Threats arising in the context of **armed conflict**, i.e. at the hands of or as a result of the activities of armed forces and groups that are parties to the conflict.
- Threats arising as a result of **communal or intra-group tension**, either within the displaced population or between the displaced and the host population, for example, as a result of competition for scarce resources, such as land, water or firewood.<sup>2</sup>

#### Some key considerations

- Ensuring safety and security is **the responsibility of the State** and its institutions. It is important to engage with national and local authorities to the extent possible when seeking to identify, prevent and respond to security threats in order to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of such actions.
- **Internally displaced persons and communities are themselves key protection actors.** They have an understanding of the local context and access to information and knowledge, which others may lack. They should be consulted and any existing coping mechanisms and strategies supported.
- **Sometimes the best protection strategy is to leave.** Even where measures are taken to enhance people's safety and security they retain the right to move elsewhere within the country or to leave the country and seek asylum abroad.

## 1. Protection from *crime, violence and abuse*

### 1.1 Overview

Forced displacement often takes place in situations characterized by a breakdown in the rule of law, where national or local authorities may lack the capacity, or the willingness, to maintain law and order and ensure the safety and security of displaced individuals and communities.

<sup>1</sup> In general, an act of violence, whether it takes place during conflict or not, can be defined as any act that inflicts physical, mental, sexual or other harm or suffering upon an individual or group, including threats of such acts, and that either results in or has the likelihood of resulting in injury, death, physical or mental disability, or deprivation.

<sup>2</sup> This list is not exhaustive and various other threats might need to be identified and addressed. This includes, for example, threats arising in the context of natural or environmental disasters, such as fires, draught, floods, earthquakes, landslides and pollution.

Together with other factors – such as armed conflict, the collapse of institutions and infrastructure, poverty, lack of education and livelihood opportunities, and a breakdown of social norms and values – this may lead to a marked increase in crime, exploitation and abuse in both the public and private spheres.

Internally displaced persons often bear the brunt of such violence. They have frequently lost the protective presence of their homes, families and communities and lack access to life-saving assistance and services, including food, shelter and basic health-care. As a result, they may find themselves at greater risk of such violence at the same time as their ability to recover from its harmful effects is undermined.

While such threats are common in both urban and rural environments, they can be particularly pronounced in large and over-crowded camps or settlements. Population density, poverty and sub-standard living conditions, combined with lack of effective law enforcement and access to justice can create fertile ground for crime, violence and abuse at the hands of internal and external actors. Such threats can range from minor offences, such as theft, robbery and vandalism, to serious violations of human rights, including rape, physical assault and killings.

The closed environment of camps and settlements coupled with anxiety and desperation stemming from trauma, marginalization and lack of hope, can contribute to an increase in the frequency and seriousness of such acts and undermine the coping mechanisms of individuals and communities as well as their ability to protect themselves.

**Table 1: Examples of common threats to life, safety and security**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Murder; killings; assassination; forced disappearance; summary or arbitrary executions; physical assault or battering.</li> <li>• Torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and other outrages upon personal dignity; mutilation or maiming; corporal punishment.</li> <li>• Sexual and gender-based violence, including rape and sexual assault, abuse or humiliation; sexual exploitation, including forced prostitution and sex in exchange for aid; harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation, forced and early pregnancy; and honour killings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abduction; kidnapping; enslavement: forced recruitment; forced labour; human trafficking; sexual slavery.</li> <li>• Forced displacement, forced return or relocation.</li> <li>• Harassment, intimidation and coercion.</li> <li>• Destruction of livelihoods and property, including land, fields, crops and livestock and other objects indispensable for people's survival; vandalism; and arson.</li> <li>• Theft; robbery; looting; cattle rustling; and fraudulent seizure/purchase of land or property.</li> <li>• Extortion; fraud; forgery; unlawful taxation; and paying of "protection" money.</li> <li>• Exploitation, obstruction or diversion of humanitarian assistance.</li> </ul>
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### 1.2 International legal principles and the responsibility of the State

International (and regional) human rights law contains a number of provisions which are of particular relevance for internally displaced persons, including the rights to life, liberty and security; to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; to freedom from slavery; to equal recognition and protection of the law; and to access to justice.

The State must ensure that all relevant authorities and agents of the State respect these rights, provide protection against violation of rights by any third parties, and ensure that individuals have access to appropriate remedies in case violations occur. To that effect, national authorities should take all appropriate legislative, administrative and executive measures to:

- Maintain law and order and strengthen civilian law enforcement, including through training and deployment of adequate numbers of civilian police, both female and male,

including in and around camps and settlements and other areas inhabited by displaced persons.

- Improve access to justice and strengthen formal and informal justice institutions and mechanisms in order to combat impunity, including by ensuring the prompt and thorough investigation and prosecution of alleged offenders.
- Build the capacity of individuals and communities to protect themselves and recover from crime, violence and abuse, including by facilitating their access to life-saving assistance and services which can reduce exposure to such threats, such as adequate shelter, livelihoods, and health care.

It is worth noting that the use of force and fire-arms for law enforcement purposes is strictly regulated under human rights law. It must be necessary and proportionate to achieve a legitimate aim, such as to make an arrest or protect the lives of civilians, and an official investigation must be conducted if it results in injury or loss of life. These and other rules are described in greater detail in the **UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials** and the **UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials**.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.3. The role of human rights and humanitarian actors

While human rights and humanitarian actors rarely have the mandate, the capacity or the resources to guarantee protection against crime, violence and abuse, they can assist national authorities and persons of concern to reduce exposure to and limit the adverse effects of such acts. Such efforts should seek to address the political and socio-economic causes and consequences of crime as well as crime itself. In order to ensure the sustainability of such efforts close coordination with national authorities and displaced and resident communities will be required.



#### In our work we can ...

##### Assessment and analysis

(See Part III.1)



- Ensure that protection assessments take into account the various threats to life, safety and security of displaced persons stemming from crime, violence and abuse. Where possible such assessments should be conducted in cooperation with security and/or law enforcement experts. It could, for instance, assess factors such as: (i) the types of threat; (ii) those that are most at risk; (iii) the actors involved and their motives; (iv) any aggravating factors or conditions; (v) the capacity of the State to address the risks, any obstacles encountered and the kind of support needed; (vi) the impact on persons of concern, their coping strategies and the kind of support they need to counter the risks involved; (vii) and any possible negative unintended consequences that might result from our intervention.

##### Advocacy

(See Part IV.3)



- Advocate with all relevant stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies and Ministries of Justice and the Interior, for adequate numbers of trained and professional civilian police, including female officers, to be deployed in camps, settlements and other civilian areas.

##### Information and communication activities

(See Part IV.6)



- Support information and education campaigns/networks, whether through radio, theatre or printed media (leaflets, posters, etc.) that provide neutral security-related information and advice. Such networks should ideally be run by the community, allow information from more than one source, take illiteracy and disabilities into account, and include safeguards for manipulation for political or military purposes. ►►

<sup>3</sup> These are available from [www.ohchr.org/english/law/index.htm](http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/index.htm)

<p><b>Material, technical and financial support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider providing material, technical or financial support to law-enforcement agencies and relevant ministries if appropriate. This can, for instance, include material support (e.g. office space or equipment, telecommunications equipment, vehicles, or fuel), managerial support (planning, coordination), or financial support (staff incentives).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide or support training relating to human rights, codes of conduct for law-enforcement officials, and principles of effective policing to police and other security personnel. Consider whether other stakeholders could benefit from similar training initiatives.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reporting mechanisms</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the establishment of adequate reporting and referral mechanisms for incidents of crime, violence and human rights abuses. Such mechanisms should preferably be run by national law enforcement authorities. In some cases, however, such mechanisms may need to be established by human rights or humanitarian actors, for instance within camps and settlements. Such mechanisms must respect privacy and confidentiality and be adequately supervised and monitored. Ensure that the informed consent of victims/witnesses is sought prior to sharing of information, that their safety is guaranteed, and that they are referred to appropriate actors for legal, medical or other assistance, as required.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Access to justice</b> (See Parts V.9 and IV.5) </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to and fair administration of justice by building the capacity of both formal and informal justice mechanisms and the capacity of individuals and communities to access and benefit from such mechanisms. This can, for instance, include material support (office space or equipment, telecommunications, vehicles, fuel, staff incentives), managerial support (planning, coordination), or training (human rights, standards of professional conduct).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community mobilization</b> (See Part IV.10) </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with the community, identify various ways to strengthen the protection capacity of individuals, communities and civil society to prevent, respond to and recover from violence, for instance through training, counselling and/or material support. This could include training on human rights and humanitarian principles and other topics, such as first aid, crime prevention, fire-fighting, mine-awareness, conflict resolution, and community relations. Pay particular attention to individuals and groups with specific needs, including single women and girls, older persons and minorities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Family unity</b> (See Part V.8) </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that any separated family members are identified, that family tracing and reunification mechanisms are established, and that immediate needs for protection and/or assistance are addressed. In the case of separated and unaccompanied children, best interests determination may need to be conducted and alternative care arrangements identified.</li> </ul>
<p><b>IDP community or camp management</b> (See Parts IV.7 and IV.12) </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that community and camp-management committees, including relief-distribution committees, are non-discriminatory, participatory and representative. Adequate safeguards against manipulation, misuse and diversion of aid to political or military forces or groups must be put in place. Camp rules should be drafted and disseminated by the committees in cooperation with camp-management authorities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community-watch systems</b> (See Annex to this chapter) </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist the community in organizing and managing, in cooperation with the police when feasible, community-watch mechanisms, as described in Annex 1 to this chapter. These must be civilian in character, include both women and men, and should receive adequate training in basic principles of law enforcement. They should be adequately supervised, monitored and equipped.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Presence</b> (See Part IV.2)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain high visibility presence in and around IDP camps, settlements and hosting areas, if security conditions permit. Beware, however, that in some cases presence can instil a false sense of safety and security among persons of concern and/or attract unwanted attention to them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Protection-based physical planning</b> (See Part V.13)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that camps, settlements and IDP-hosting areas conform, to the extent possible, with the principles of protection-based physical planning as regards site-selection, layout, and distribution of aid and design of services. This includes, for example, ensuring adequate distance from armed conflict or other sources of violence; security lighting; community participation in family-plot layout; allocation of adequate space per family; safe access to resources, such as food, water and firewood, and services, such as police, camp-management offices, sanitation facilities, schools, markets and community centres; and establishment of child-friendly spaces. Work together with partners to ensure that gender, age and disabilities are taken into consideration.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relief assistance</b> (See Part IV.7)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for or provide assistance and services which can reduce exposure to or mitigate the effects of crime, violence and abuse. This can, for instance, include food, firewood, fuel-efficient stoves, and various non-food items, particularly if IDPs are exposed to risks when acquiring such items by other means.</li> <li>• Ensure that relief distribution does not create or expose IDPs to additional risks. It should take place in a safe environment and must be distributed equitably and in a non-discriminatory manner. It should also take into account and address the specific needs of women, children, older persons and those living with disabilities, as well as the needs of the surrounding communities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Education and socio-economic activities</b> (See Parts V.16 and V.17)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support socio-economic initiatives, such as education or vocational training and cultural, religious and sports activities. This can help to limit exposure to various threats, reduce resort to violence within communities, help individuals recover from the effects of violence, and contribute to sustainable livelihoods.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evacuation or relocation</b> (See Part IV.9)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where necessary, facilitate the evacuation or relocation of certain individuals or groups (e.g. victims, witnesses or others at risk) to a place where their physical safety can be guaranteed. Evacuation or relocation are usually measures of last resort and minimum standards of safety, food, health, and shelter must be met both during and after it takes place. It is often a temporary security measure and should not delay the search for a sustainable solution</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health and psycho-social support</b> (See Parts V.14 and IV. 11)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that victims/survivors of crime, violence and abuse have access to adequate health care and other services. This should include physical, mental and reproductive health care and psycho-social support for people dealing with the effects of violence, including trauma and post-traumatic stress disorders.</li> </ul>
<p>Do you have suggestions about activities or field practices? Share them with us at <a href="mailto:hqidphb@unhcr.org">hqidphb@unhcr.org</a></p>	

## 2. Protection from the *effects of armed conflict* and activities of parties to a conflict

### 2.1 Overview

Forced displacement is not only a regrettable consequence of armed conflict. It is frequently the result of a deliberate strategy aimed at terrorizing, humiliating and destroying individuals

and communities. As such it has become both a method of warfare as well as, in some cases, the very objective of conflict itself. The impact upon individuals and communities has been devastating. An estimated 25 million persons are currently internally displaced as a result of armed conflict and civilian casualties of conflict in general outnumber those among military actors by almost four to one.

Violence against civilians at the hands of armed forces and groups is often widespread, systematic and conducted in a climate of impunity. This includes, for example:

- **Direct or indiscriminate attacks against civilians or civilian property** and other unlawful means and methods of warfare, including forced displacement, mass rape, acts of terror, starvation and destruction of land, homes and other property, such as crops and livestock.
- **Ill-treatment of civilians or those placed *hors de combat*** in the power of parties to the conflict, including murder, torture and other ill-treatment, sexual assault, rape and sexual humiliation, arbitrary arrest and detention, extra-judicial killings and disappearances, extortion, harassment, confiscation of documents, and appropriation of land and property. Such acts might take place in areas of refuge or transit, including in and around camps and settlements, in detention or prison facilities, at checkpoints, or entry/exit points into towns and villages.
- **Presence of armed actors/groups in camps, settlements and IDP-hosting areas**, including their use for rest, recruitment and/or resources, negates the humanitarian character of these areas and poses a serious threat to their residents, host communities and humanitarian workers. The presence of armed actors frequently results in an increase in forced recruitment, sexual assault and exploitation, various forms of physical violence, murder, torture and ill-treatment, harassment, extortion, theft and destruction of property, and diversion of humanitarian aid. It might also expose the civilian population to attack and a range of punitive measures by other parties to the conflict, including restrictions on freedom of movement and access to humanitarian aid.
- **Forced recruitment into armed forces or groups**, particularly of children and adolescents who might be forced to participate in hostilities or serve as sex slaves, spies, porters, cleaners or cooks. Such children are often compelled to witness or commit acts that might leave them traumatized and hinder their reintegration into society upon release (see Part V.5). 

## 2.2 International law and the responsibilities of parties to a conflict

International humanitarian and human rights law, together with national law, provide a comprehensive legal framework governing the conduct of hostilities and the treatment of civilians in times of armed conflict.

See **Principles 10 and 11 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement**, which are reprinted in Annex 1. For further information see Part I.2. 

**International humanitarian law**, which applies to State and non-State actors equally, comes into effect in times of armed conflict. While different legal provisions may apply depending on whether the conflict is international (between States) or non-international (between a State and non-State actors, or between such actors), the basic principles regarding the protection of civilians remain similar.<sup>4</sup> The law contains two sets of rules of particular importance to civilians, including internally displaced persons:

<sup>4</sup> These are primarily based on customary law as well as the four Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I, which apply in international armed conflict, and Additional Protocol II, which together with Common Article 3 of the Conventions, apply in non-international conflict.

- **Rules limiting the means and methods of warfare** which prohibit direct or indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objectives and require parties to a conflict to distinguish at all times between combatants/fighters and civilians.<sup>5</sup> (See Part 1.2) 
- **Rules containing fundamental guarantees of humane treatment** which oblige parties to a conflict to treat all persons who do not or have ceased to take part in hostilities in a humane manner and to protect them against violence to life, health and physical or mental wellbeing.<sup>6</sup>

All parties to a conflict, both State and non-State actors, are obliged at all times to distinguish between civilians and combatants/fighters and to respect the humanitarian nature of camps, settlements and other IDP-hosting areas. This entails taking all feasible measures to protect such areas from direct attack and the indiscriminate effects of military operations, and to treat individuals in their power humanely. The State, including its armed forces, and armed groups have an obligation to ensure that military activities and the activities of members of the armed forces, whether on active duty or not, respect humanitarian law and principles relating to protection of civilians, including by:

- Providing training on humanitarian law to the armed forces
- Criminalizing violations of the law and establishing adequate legal, administrative and disciplinary structures to prevent, monitor and punish violations.
- Prosecuting and punishing, or extraditing upon request, those responsible for serious violations of the law. The obligation to prosecute and punish is further strengthened by **international criminal law**, which covers acts such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide (see Part 1.2.3). 

**International (and regional) human rights law** continues to apply in times of armed conflict and the national authorities should continue to respect the rights outlined in section 1.2 above. While the State can lawfully derogate from some human rights during times of war or public emergency, such derogation is subject to strict conditions. Moreover, the rights mentioned above are non-derogable, meaning that they must be respected at all times, including during armed conflict. The obligation to respect human rights can also extend to armed groups in control of territory, particularly if they exercise State-like functions. Such groups have in some cases expressly agreed to respect human rights.

### 2.3 Role of human rights and humanitarian actors

Armed conflict poses a unique set of challenges to humanitarian operations. An effective response will in most cases require a coordinated approach, involving not only human rights, humanitarian and developmental actors but also political and military actors at the national, regional, and international level. In most cases it is recommended that protection strategies and activities are coordinated with relevant security staff and with other stakeholders, including the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the country as well as peace-keeping missions, where present.

In the initial stage protection efforts often focus primarily on building the capacity of national authorities as well as that of displaced individuals and communities (see the table below).

<sup>5</sup> Prohibited acts include direct and indiscriminate attacks against civilians or their settlements; use of civilians to shield military objectives from attack or to shield, favour or impede military operations; displacement of civilian populations; acts of violence intended to spread terror; starvation of the civilian population as a method of warfare and of attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable for its survival; reprisals against civilians or their property and collective punishments, which, in practice, often take the form of destruction of property, leading to displacement. The law also prohibits the use of means and methods of warfare that cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering, or that cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment or that jeopardize the health or survival of the population. This includes exploding bullets, chemical and biological weapons, blinding laser weapons and anti-personnel mines.

<sup>6</sup> This includes murder, mutilation, torture and cruel, humiliating or degrading treatment; rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault; and forced recruitment of children and slavery in all its forms, including sexual slavery, exploitation and abuse.

Where such efforts prove insufficient other responses may need to be considered. In some cases, this may require advocacy and support for peace negotiations and agreements, the deployment of regional or international civilian or police monitors, or referral to relevant political bodies, such as the UN Security Council.<sup>7</sup>



### In our work we can ...

#### Early warning and contingency planning

- Work with security staff to establish early-warning and preparedness mechanisms aimed at identifying and responding to potential security threats, including military operations and the infiltration of armed elements into camps, settlements and other IDP-hosting areas.

#### Advocacy (See Parts IV.3 and II 2)



- Work with civil-military liaison officers to establish direct lines of communication with armed forces and armed groups to advocate for respect of relevant humanitarian principles, to explain the humanitarian mandate and the need to maintain a clear distinction between civilian and humanitarian action and military operations. Insist that IDP camps and settlements are kept free of infiltration and are not used for recruitment or material and political support.

#### Preventing militarization of civilian areas

- Work with the community and other partners to prevent the militarization of camps, settlements and other IDP-hosting areas. This may, for instance, include (i) using information and communication campaigns or other activities to sensitize the community of the negative impact of militarization; (ii) discussing with the community what measures can help improve their security; and (iii) ensuring that IDP camps and settlements are located away from areas of conflict, or areas known to be inherently unstable or suffering from endemic violence.

#### Access to justice (See Part V.10)



- Advocate with the State, and where possible non-State actors, for measures to end impunity, including prompt and effective investigation, prosecution and punishment of violations of humanitarian and human rights law and national military codes. Acts that amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, and other serious violations of the law require special attention.

#### Identification, neutralization and separation of armed elements

- Where appropriate, advocate for the establishment of security mechanisms to prevent infiltration by armed forces or groups into civilian camps and settlements. Such mechanisms can, depending on the circumstances, include (i) screening at the entry to and inside camps and settlements, or when accessing assistance or services; (ii) encouraging self-identification of combatants/fighters and voluntary separation from the civilian population; and (iii) spot-checks, weapons searches, and, on an exceptional basis, physical separation of such individuals from the civilian population.
- The involvement of human rights and humanitarian actors in such activities must be carefully evaluated and cleared at the senior level.

<sup>7</sup> In the context of its work with refugees UNHCR has developed a 'ladder of options' composed of soft, medium and hard approaches. The soft approach involves preventive measures, where international organizations provide support to the State to maintain safety and security; the medium approach involves the use of the international civilian or police monitors who provide technical expertise and support to local authorities, through training, mentoring and monitoring; while the hard approach involves the direct use of international peace-keeping or peace-building forces, authorized by the UN Security Council, to maintain safety and security.

<p><b>Forced recruitment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate and take other measures to prevent forced recruitment and use of children by armed groups.</li> <li>• Where children have been or are being recruited, work with specialized partners to secure their release from armed forces and/or groups. Such efforts do not have to form part of a formal disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, but should be pursued at all times.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Demobilization, disarmament, reintegration</b> (See Part V.5)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DDR programmes should be coordinated and implemented by specialized actors with the required expertise and resources. Human rights and humanitarian actors can however support such programmes, for instance by, (i) advocating for the establishment and adequate funding of DDR programmes where needed; (ii) advocating to ensure that such programmes are available to and meet the needs of women and girls on equal basis with those of men and boys; (iii) working with families and communities to encourage them to accept and prepare for the return and reintegration of former combatants, particularly children formerly associated with armed groups; (iv) assisting families of former combatants to reunite; and (v) and ensuring that former combatants have equal access to programmes that provide psycho-social support, education, vocational training or micro-financing for small businesses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mine Action</b> (See Part V.6)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for and support mine action activities in all mine affected areas. Mine action should be coordinated and implemented by specialized actors, such as UNMAS, that have the required expertise and resources. All human rights and humanitarian actors can however support such activities, for example by: (i) working with specialized actors to identify mine-affected civilian areas, including displaced camps and settlements, public buildings or spaces, fields, water-points, schools and kindergartens; (ii) providing financial or material support to mine action programmes/actors, for instance in the form of fuel, vehicles and other equipment; and (iii) including mine awareness and education in school curricula and other educational or training activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Working with armed forces</b> (See Part II.2)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peacekeeping-forces and/or national armed forces can, on an exceptional basis and as a last resort, provide security to humanitarian operations, for instance by providing logistical or technical support or escorting relief convoys. Such support must be carefully evaluated and cleared at the senior level, as it may risk blurring the distinction between humanitarian and military action and undermine the actual or perceived independence, impartiality and neutrality of the former. The presence of military forces can also expose communities to attack or create other security risks, such as exposure to sexual abuse.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Safe days or route, and humanitarian zones</b> (See Part IV.2)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On exceptional basis and as a last resort consider the possibility of encouraging relevant actors to negotiate 'safe routes' or 'safe days' to facilitate the delivery of life-saving assistance or services to populations in need. In extreme cases, this can also include the establishment of humanitarian zones (through humanitarian negotiations with parties to a conflict or by an agreement among the latter) or security zones (secured by force). Such negotiations should only take place at the senior level following a careful assessment and clearance by experienced security staff and with the agreement of the Humanitarian Coordinator. Such arrangements can and in the past have failed to protect civilian populations, instead exposing them to serious threats.</li> </ul>
<p>Do you have suggestions about activities or field practices? Share them with us at <a href="mailto:hqidphb@unhcr.org">hqidphb@unhcr.org</a></p>	

## 3. Preventing and responding to *inter- and intra-community tensions*

### 3.1 Overview

Whether internally displaced persons find refuge in camps, rural or urban settlements or within existing communities, their protection and coping mechanisms will, to a large extent, depend on their relationship with the surrounding communities. Conflict between displaced and host communities can arise for a number of reasons. Where ethnic, racial or political tension has been at the root of the displacement, this will be perpetuated on both national and communal levels during displacement.

Even without underlying inter-communal tensions, potential sources of conflict are numerous. The disorderly movement or arrival of large numbers of people in itself is likely to cause upheaval. Large-scale movements and settlement of pastoralists with their cattle have caused clashes in the past. If the new arrivals are fleeing from armed conflict, host communities, including previously settled IDPs, might fear military incursions or reprisals, or more insecurity and criminality.

The most common source of tension between displaced and host communities relates to the competition over scarce resources, such as land, water, food and firewood. Host communities are often concerned about depletion of already scarce resources and may feel compelled to protect their livelihoods and the long-term sustainability of their communities. While such issues might not be apparent at the earlier stages of a displacement crisis, the potential for tension and conflict often increases with time.

Tensions can also arise as a result of actual or perceived discriminatory or preferential treatment. As an example, singling displaced individuals and communities out for humanitarian assistance and services, while neglecting the needs of the host community, is likely to result in increased tension and hostility. Similar tensions may arise between different communities or groups of displaced persons, for instance if assistance is only provided to those who have recently been displaced.

### 3.2 The role of human rights and humanitarian actors



#### In our work we can ...

##### Assessment and analysis

(See Part III.1)



- Ensure that all assessments take into account the protection and assistance needs of both the displaced and the resident community on an equal basis. Humanitarian efforts must be based on an objective assessment of the needs of persons of concern, without discrimination of any kind. Where possible, include representatives of both communities in assessments and try to identify any potential sources of tension as well as areas of common interest between the communities.

##### Information and communication activities

(See Part IV.6)



- Help establish open and transparent channels of communication and dialogue between the displaced and the host community. This can, for instance, include various cultural and social activities and exchanges or joint councils or committees that bring together representatives of both communities to discuss and resolve matters of mutual interest and concern.
- Support information campaigns and other activities that provide culturally sensitive information to both communities about ways to minimize the adverse effects of displacement and facilitate the peaceful co-existence and integration of displaced persons in areas of displacement.



<b>Confidence-building measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make efforts to build understanding and confidence between the displaced and host communities. This can, for instance, be done by highlighting the positive impact that the presence of IDPs can have for the host community, such as in terms of improved access to assistance and services.</li> </ul>
<b>Access to assistance and services</b> <i>(See Part IV.7)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure, wherever possible, that the displaced and host communities have full and equal access to humanitarian assistance and services, including water, food, education and health care. A comprehensive and integrated approach to assistance and services, based on an objective assessment of humanitarian needs, is essential and can help reduce tension between the communities. Make every effort to avoid giving the impression that assistance is provided in a discriminatory way or that displaced persons are receiving preferential treatment.</li> <li>• Support and help improve local infrastructure and services, such as schools and health clinics, and avoid creating parallel structures for IDPs wherever possible. This may also include improving roads, bridges, water and sewage systems, communication systems, and other infrastructure that can benefit both populations.</li> </ul>
<b>Conflict prevention, mediation and resolution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the establishment of complaint and conflict resolution methods/mechanisms, including representatives of both communities, to address and resolve any disputes that may arise. Such mechanisms, which should include both women and men of different ages and backgrounds, can be developed with modest material support, for instance in the form of meeting space, transport and/or refreshments during meetings.</li> <li>• Such mechanisms should be encouraged to pay particular attention to and address any disputes that may arise over the use of land and other resources at an early stage.</li> </ul>
<b>Law enforcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage relevant authorities, such as police and other law enforcement agencies, to take action to prevent and respond to any potential increase in crime, violence and abuse. This can include various forms of police-community initiatives and crime prevention strategies.</li> <li>• Where relevant, ensure that the displaced community is informed of any laws or regulations that may apply, such as on the use of land or collection of water and firewood.</li> </ul>
<b>Protection of the environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make every effort to protect the environment. Work with the displaced and residential communities to prevent and respond to pollution, depletion of natural resources such as water and firewood, and over-grazing or use of land. As an example, help to identify and negotiate for the allocation of alternative land to displaced communities and support programmes that protect and restore natural resources and habitats, such as water preservation and/or reforestation programmes.</li> <li>• Ensure that environmental concerns are taken into account when planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating humanitarian programmes and projects, including in particular those relating to shelter, water and sanitation, and early recovery.</li> </ul>
<b>Firewood collection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide environment-friendly cooking/heating fuel and/or methods (such as fuel-efficient stoves) in order to minimize environmental damage and prevent disputes over firewood from arising.</li> </ul>
<p>Do you have suggestions about activities or field practices? Share them with us at <a href="mailto:hqidphb@unhcr.org">hqidphb@unhcr.org</a></p>	



## 4. Key actors

- At the **national level**, key actors include internally displaced and host communities; ministries of justice, defence and the interior; law-enforcement agencies; courts and other justice institutions; prison authorities; armed forces; human rights commissions and ombudsmen; parliamentary commissions and committees that legislate on or maintain oversight over armed forces or law-enforcement agencies; civil society organizations and NGOs.
- At the **regional level**, key actors include any regional military and civilian peacekeeping forces; regional organizations, such as the African Union, the European Union, Economic Community of West African States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; regional human rights commissions and courts; governments of neighbouring States, influential states in the region, and donor states.
- At the **international level**, key actors include any UN military and civilian peacekeeping forces; staff of the UN security-management system; security/protection staff of individual organizations and NGOs; UN Security Council; ICRC; UNICEF (particularly relating to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers); UN Mine Action Service; International Criminal Court (ICC); UN treaty bodies and special procedures.



## References

- Camp Management Toolkit, Norwegian Refugee Council, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, forthcoming in 2008.
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- Field Security Handbook, United Nations, 1995.
- Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies, Inter-agency Standing Committee, 2003.
- Inter-organizational Security Measure: Framework for Accountability for the United Nations Security Management System, 2002.
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- Working with the Military, UNHCR, 2007. [www.refworld.org](http://www.refworld.org)

## Annex 1

### Community Watch Mechanisms

<b>Introduction</b>	While primary responsibility rests squarely with the State, individuals and communities can also play an important role in enhancing safety and security. Community watch mechanisms (CWM) can – if adequately trained, equipped and supervised – help reduce the levels of crime, violence and abuse within the community. This note summarises some good practice relating to the establishment and running of CWM. It should be noted however that CWM should generally not be used in highly politicized or militarized settings owing to the risk such mechanisms can pose to individuals and communities that participate in them.
<b>Definition and overall aim</b>	CWM can be defined as mechanisms that are organized and staffed by members of the community with the aim of supporting civilian law enforcement through a police-community partnership. Such mechanisms have particular value where police and security forces are absent, overwhelmed, or otherwise lack the capacity to maintain law and order. In addition, they can play an important role in identifying risk factors and addressing minor disputes, tensions, and conflict within the community, especially in camp settings.
<b>Roles and responsibilities</b>	CWM can be assigned different roles and responsibilities depending on the context and while no one model will fit all, common functions have included: patrolling; providing protection through presence; monitoring and reporting; assisting victims and survivors to seek assistance and report crime; registering complaints and mediating minor disputes; protecting community property from theft, sabotage, or fire; assisting with crowd control, for instance during relief distribution; and liaising between the community and police or camp authorities.
<b>Not police forces</b>	It is important to note that CWM are neither part of nor substitute to effective law enforcement and their members should under no circumstances carry arms or be authorized to perform police related functions, such as arresting, detaining or interrogating suspects or interviewing victims and witnesses. They should be entirely civilian in character, have no established links with armed forces or actors, and be closely supervised by relevant authorities as well as the community.
<b>Key considerations and lessons learned</b>	<p>Some of the lessons learned from previous experience with CWM projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proper <b>consultation and cooperation with local and other relevant authorities</b>, including police, military and camp management authorities, must be ensured. CWM should be established with the consent and under the supervision of relevant authorities, which retain primary responsibility for safety and security.</li> <li>• CWM should be <b>participatory, representative and include men and women</b> of different ages and ethnic or religious background, chosen by the community through a fair, open and transparent process.</li> <li>• <b>Roles, responsibilities and reporting lines must be clearly delineated</b> in a written memorandum of understanding between relevant stakeholders and a code of conduct agreed upon.</li> <li>• Adequate <b>supervisory, monitoring and disciplinary systems</b> must be put in place, including safeguards against corruption and abuse of power, such as diversion of aid and sexual exploitation and abuse.</li> <li>• <b>Adequate equipment</b> must be provided, which may include support in the form of identity documents; office space or equipment; communication equipment such as phones or radios; clothing and footwear, including uniforms, rain coats and patrol boots; flashlights; whistles; bicycles or vehicles/fuel; and in some cases, modest financial incentives.</li> </ul>



- **Training** in human rights and humanitarian law, as well as professional conduct and basic principles of community policing, must take place.
- While nominated by the community participants may need to be **vetted by relevant authorities**. To minimize the risk of corruption and enable greater number of individuals to benefit from the project, terms of service should be limited to 12-18 months, made subject to regular but not too frequent rotation. Particularly talented participants can be retained for training or supervisory functions.
- CWM must be entirely **civilian in character and prohibited from carrying arms**. Every effort must be made to ensure that such mechanisms neither act nor present themselves as law enforcement agents, do not become militarized or establish links with military groups or militias.

**Further information**

'A Comparative Review of Refugee Security Mechanisms' (UNHCR, ESS/EPAU, Dec 2004); 'Preserving the Civilian Character of Refugee Camps: Lessons from the Kigoma Refugee Programme in Tanzania' (Jean-François Durieux, Track Two, Vol. 9, No. 3, Nov. 2000).