Australian Government

Australian Civil-Military Centre

From Principle to Practice:
Protecting civilians in violent contexts

A field handbook

HUMANITARIAN
ADVISORY GROUP

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FOREWORD

It is fitting that this handbook is launched on the milestone of both the 20-year anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1265 (1999), and the 70th-year anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. This field handbook *'From Principle to Practice: Protecting civilians in violent contexts'* aims to further operationalise the legal frameworks that underpin the Protection of Civilians (PoC) and bring the 2015 *Australian Guidelines on the Protection of Civilians* to life.

This resource is accessible and will be used by those who are deployed into violent contexts where civilians are at risk of harm. For militaries, aid organisations, police and civilian government agencies, this field handbook paints a picture of what protecting civilians actually looks like, and provides examples, tools and resources to enhance the effectiveness and the coordination of protective activities.

This handbook contributes to a growing body of work on what PoC looks like on the ground, and provides the context around who is providing protection, how and why. The evolving character of modern conflicts requires the interaction of people who serve as diplomats, in legal roles and in command, control and communication functions in the military and in international organisations. This handbook is for those who are actually faced with the decisions, the planning and the outcomes of keeping people safe. Without resources such as this, the legal frameworks would remain just that.

It is our hope that this field handbook will be used by those who are sent to uphold these frameworks and the result will be fewer civilians harmed and more protection for the most vulnerable in our world.

Alan Ryan
Executive Director
ACMC

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFP	Australian Federal Police
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
CAAC	Children and Armed Conflict
CPA	Child Protection Adviser
CSOs	Civil society organisations
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EU	European Union
HRG	Humanitarian Reference Group
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JPTs	Joint Protection Teams
MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
MSF	Mèdicines Sans Frontiéres
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PMSC	Private Military and Security Companies
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PoC	Protection of Civilians
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	UN Human Rights Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This field handbook aims to provide the 'what', the 'why' and the 'how' of protecting civilians in violent contexts. In the two decades since the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) recognised that keeping people safe from harm during times of conflict is a matter of international peace and security, there has been a great deal of progress. However, alongside the substantial developments in diplomatic and legal frameworks, on-the-ground practice has struggled to keep up. For a variety of reasons, comprehensive, coordinated and consistent Protection of Civilians (PoC) action remains a work in progress, and a gap this handbook addresses.

AUDIENCE

This handbook is primarily intended for people working at the operational level, particularly in field contexts, rather than high-level policymakers. PoC is achieved, or not, at the operational level. The handbook is aimed at people working for governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the United Nations (UN), militaries and other organisations in contexts involving armed conflict or other situations of violence.

AIMS

This handbook:

- Provides guidance on how the strategic-level *Australian Guidelines on PoC*[1] can be applied at the operational level across all 'international operations and engagements' in which Australia is involved

- Translates the legal frameworks into accessible and practical examples that can inform future PoC action

- Illustrates how the complementary efforts of a range of organisations under different mandates can collectively contribute to PoC outcomes

- Continues to build an Australian national architecture of PoC policy, doctrine and guidance through drawing on lessons learned from 20 years of PoC

HOW TO USE THE HANDBOOK

The handbook is divided into seven chapters. Chapters 1-4 provide general background and the contextual relevance of PoC. Chapter 5 highlights tangible, operational and policy examples of PoC in practice corresponding to the three PoC Focus Areas highlighted in the Australian Government PoC Guidelines (herein 'the Guidelines'). The three focus areas are protection through dialogue and engagement; provision of physical protection and establishment of a protective environment.

This handbook also provides links to further information about online training, organisations and reference materials related to PoC.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Civilian
Any person who is not or is no longer directly participating in hostilities or other acts of violence shall be considered a civilian, unless he or she is a member of armed forces or groups.[2]

Combatant
Combatants comprise all organised armed forces, groups and units (except medical service and religious personnel) which are under the command of a party to a conflict and are subject to an internal disciplinary system, which enforces compliance with the Law of Armed Conflict.[3]

Armed Conflict

Armed combat involves the armed forces of at least one state (or one or more armed factions seeking to gain control of all or part of the state), and in which at least 1,000 people have been killed by the fighting during the course of the conflict. [4]

Other situations of violence

Where civilians suffer the consequences of a wide range of abuses and violations that are committed on varying scales.[5]

Collateral Damage

Incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, or damage to civilian property not part of an authorized target.[6]

Threats of physical violence

All hostile acts or situations that are likely to lead to death or serious bodily injury, regardless of the source of the threat. Such situations may include potential or actual physical harm to civilians associated with the presence of mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, acts or attempts to kill, torture or maim; forcibly displace, starve or pillage, commit acts of sexual violence, recruit and use children by armed forces and groups, abduct or arbitrarily detain persons. Those situations may be caused by elements of state and non-state actors to an armed conflict, inter-communal violence, serious crimes or other situations of internal disturbance affecting civilians.[7]

Sentul, West Java/Indonesia - April 6th, 2013: An Indonesian UN Peacekeeper in a UN armored vehicle. Shutterstock.

CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO PoC

1.1 WHAT IS PoC?

Protection of civilians is ensuring the safety of people threatened with harm.

PoC in armed conflict is enshrined in international humanitarian law (IHL) and has therefore been a longstanding feature of Australia's involvement in international operations.

As the international community's engagement with and understanding of PoC has grown, a more expansive concept of PoC has developed, which incorporates understandings of international human rights law, international criminal law and international refugee law.

Following the human catastrophes of the mid-1990s in Rwanda and Bosnia, the UN – and its Security Council in particular – began developing a thematic agenda on PoC. In collaboration with member states and a range of humanitarian actors, a more clearly articulated framework has emerged. It seeks to ensure the physical protection of vulnerable civilians and access to life-saving assistance while pursuing efforts to create sustainable protective environments.

Building on this framework and recognising the need for a holistic approach to implementing PoC that incorporates all aspects of the global PoC agenda, the Australian Guidelines uses the following expansive definition:

> *PoC includes all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of civilians in accordance with the law, including human rights law, IHL, international criminal law and international refugee law.*[8]

Why do we need to protect civilians?

In the 20 years between 1999 to 2019, over 5.5 million people have died in various conflicts around the globe.[9] As conflicts progress civilians can often become the target of armed groups, in addition to being caught in the crossfire. In 1999, the UNSC, through Resolution 1265, acknowledged that civilians account for the vast majority of casualties in armed conflicts and that a more concerted and coordinated effort was needed to enhance their protection.

1.2 WHEN DO WE NEED TO PROTECT CIVILIANS?

PoC is most often applied in situations of armed conflict and other situations of violence, including where peacekeepers are deployed.

For Australia, the commitment to PoC applies across all 'international operations and engagements' in which Australia is involved, whether mandated by the UNSC or not. In keeping with the Guidelines, these international operations and engagements can include combat, enforcement, peace, humanitarian, stabilisation and counterinsurgency operations in international and non-international armed conflict, post-conflict settings, and other situations of armed violence, and cover both military and civilian deployments.

The Guidelines[10] lay out seven key principles that underpin Australia's PoC efforts as part of these operations.

Guiding principles for protection of civilians

Across all international operations and engagements, Australia's engagement in PoC will be guided by the following principles:

PoC is integral to Australia's contribution to international peace and security

PoC strategies reflect Australia's international legal obligations including, where applicable, international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international criminal law and international refugee law

PoC strategies will support the host state's protection efforts or inform actions to protect civilians when the host state is deemed unable or unwilling to protect its own civilians, or when government forces themselves pose a threat to civilians

PoC strategies will include planning and consultation with civil society organisations and local community members with a view to creating a sustainable impact

PoC strategies will recognise and address the different needs of vulnerable groups including women and girls, men and boys, the frail and wounded, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities, refugees and internally displaced persons, and professionals at risk such as medical personnel

Australian agencies will act in coordination with all protection actors including military, police and civilian components

Across all operations Australia will support, and not detract, from PoC.

Source: Australian Guidelines on PoC, 2015.

Relationship to other protection frameworks

Many of the commonly used protection frameworks share a common objective to alleviate human suffering resulting from violence. However, there are key distinctions between these concepts that determine when and how they apply. Table 1 outlines the differences between PoC and other key frameworks.

TABLE 1: PoC, R2P, Humanitarian Protection – What's the difference?

	Humanitarian Protection	Responsibility to Protect (R2P)	Protection of Civilians
Definition	Activities carried out by humanitarian organisations to protect the fundamental well-being of affected populations.[11] These activities are firmly guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.[12]	Globally agreed principle that states and the international community have responsibilities in protecting civilian populations from the four mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.[13]	All activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of civilians in accordance with the law, including human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law and international refugee law.[14]
Applicability	In and out of conflict, including natural disasters and other emergencies.	To populations (civilians and combatants) experiencing or at risk of the four mass atrocity crimes.	To violations against civilians in situations of armed conflict and other violence.

1.3 HOW DO WE PROTECT PEOPLE?

The Australian Guidelines identify three focus areas for Australian actors to contribute to protection of civilians.

Figure 1: Three focus areas for PoC action

Three focus areas for PoC action:

- Protection through **dialogue and engagement**
- Provision of **physical protection**
- Establishment of a **protective environment**
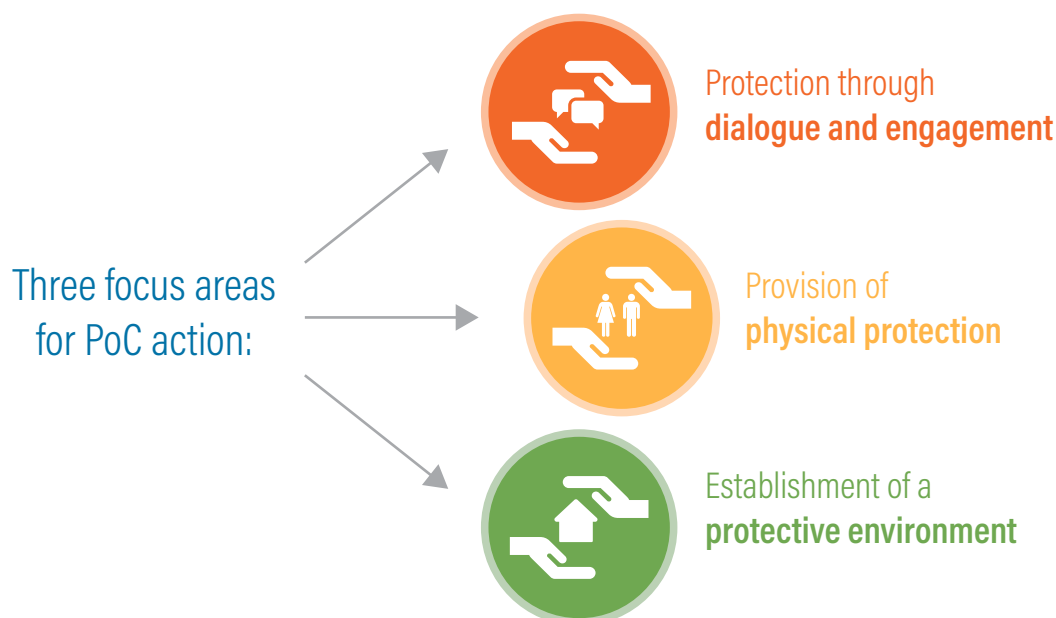
The three focus areas are mutually reinforcing and should be implemented simultaneously where possible. Overlap often means activities can relate to multiple focus areas.

Each of the areas can involve PoC efforts that are pre-emptive, preventive, reactive or consolidatory.

The three focus areas represent a suite of actions that different actors can take to address both the symptoms and causes of violence.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

It is important to understand PoC within a range of contexts. Different situations require different responses.

2.1 TYPE OF CONFLICT

War can broadly be classed as international (between states) or intra-state (within states). Since the end of the Cold War, intrastate conflict has become much more prevalent, including the direct targeting of civilians, sometimes on a mass scale. In some cases, combatants live amongst civilians, making distinguishing perpetrators of violence difficult.

Intrastate conflict has international repercussions which complicate civilian protection due to issues of transnational hostilities, state sovereignty and anti-terror interventions. Grievances fuelling such armed attacks, and the threat they may pose to particular groups of civilians (minorities, religious groups, women), require in-depth understanding to effectively plan protection strategies.

2.2 TARGETS OF VIOLENCE

Civilians are often the main victims of violence. They can be caught in the crossfire, but in many cases are deliberately targeted by armed actors. Violence takes many forms, as Figure 2 highlights, and the targets vary between contexts.

Different population groups will be vulnerable to threats at different stages of a conflict cycle. Understanding this will enable responders to best meet the changing needs of the affected communities.

Figure 2: Forms of violence

Widespread and **systematic** resulting in massive deaths through acts of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or ethnic cleansing

Temporary and **changing**, through isolated or sporadic attacks

Perpetrated by **government** or **rebel** groups

Perpetrated by **actors that defy simple categorisation**

Conducted with **military grade arms** or more **rudimentary weapons**

Conducted **without any weapons,** such as depravation measures or sexual violence

When and Where?

By Who?

¿How?

Violence takes many forms

2.3 ARMED ACTORS

It is important to understand the structures of armed actors, and therefore their potential impact and modes of operation, when advocating for PoC and adherence to IHL.
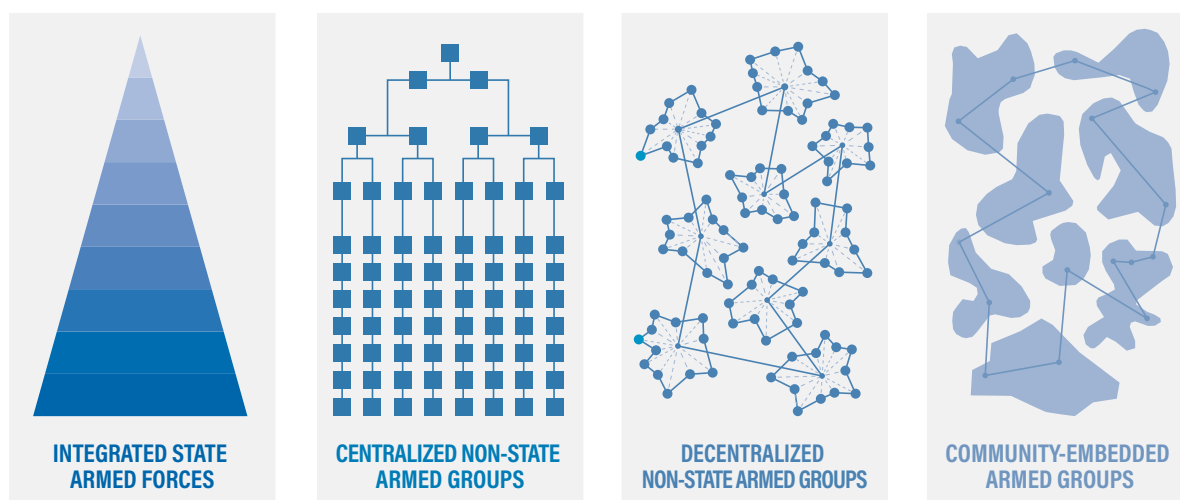
The structure of a group is important for all levels of the protection matrix. Belligerents may be a loose collection of people or a well-trained, disciplined group seeking a specific goal, or anything in between. For example, a guerrilla group versus an armed group which follows traditional military structures require different approaches.

Ideology and discipline may affect how armed actors view civilians, and if they have been exposed to or follow IHL. However, identifying them in this way can create problems if they are regarded as homogenous and unchanging.

Figure 3 below from the ICRC Roots of Restraint in War shows the different structures that armed groups can take.[15]

Figure 3: Structures of Armed Groups

| INTEGRATED STATE ARMED FORCES | CENTRALIZED NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS | DECENTRALIZED NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS | COMMUNITY-EMBEDDED ARMED GROUPS |

📌 *Perpetrator Intent:* The aim of perpetrators is key to how they will treat civilians, especially if they are targeting particular groups, such as in committing one of the four mass atrocity crimes. A detailed assessment of belligerents' respective goals and motivations cannot be separated from the context in which they operate. The better the aims of an armed group are understood, the more effectively protection strategies, including prevention and deterrence, can be planned.

2.4 CONFLICT ANALYSIS

A detailed conflict analysis is critical to inform integrated PoC strategies. The following framework provides indicative questions that can be used to understand conflict dynamics and respond accordingly. Refer to Annex A for a more detailed list of useful tools and approaches for improving PoC in a given context.

A conflict analysis with protection at its core aims to identify armed groups with the interests, capability and intent to inflict violence on civilians. A comprehensive analysis will draw on all information sources, including military and other intelligence, newspapers, social media analysis, radio, NGO reports, and security situation reports.

Tool: Strategic Conflict Analysis

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has proposed a three-element model for undertaking a strategic conflict analysis, with questions to guide understanding of the context, dynamics and possible strategies.[16] Whilst the below is not the entire analysis framework, the posed questions are useful considerations for a wide variety of actors in a context in which PoC is a priority.
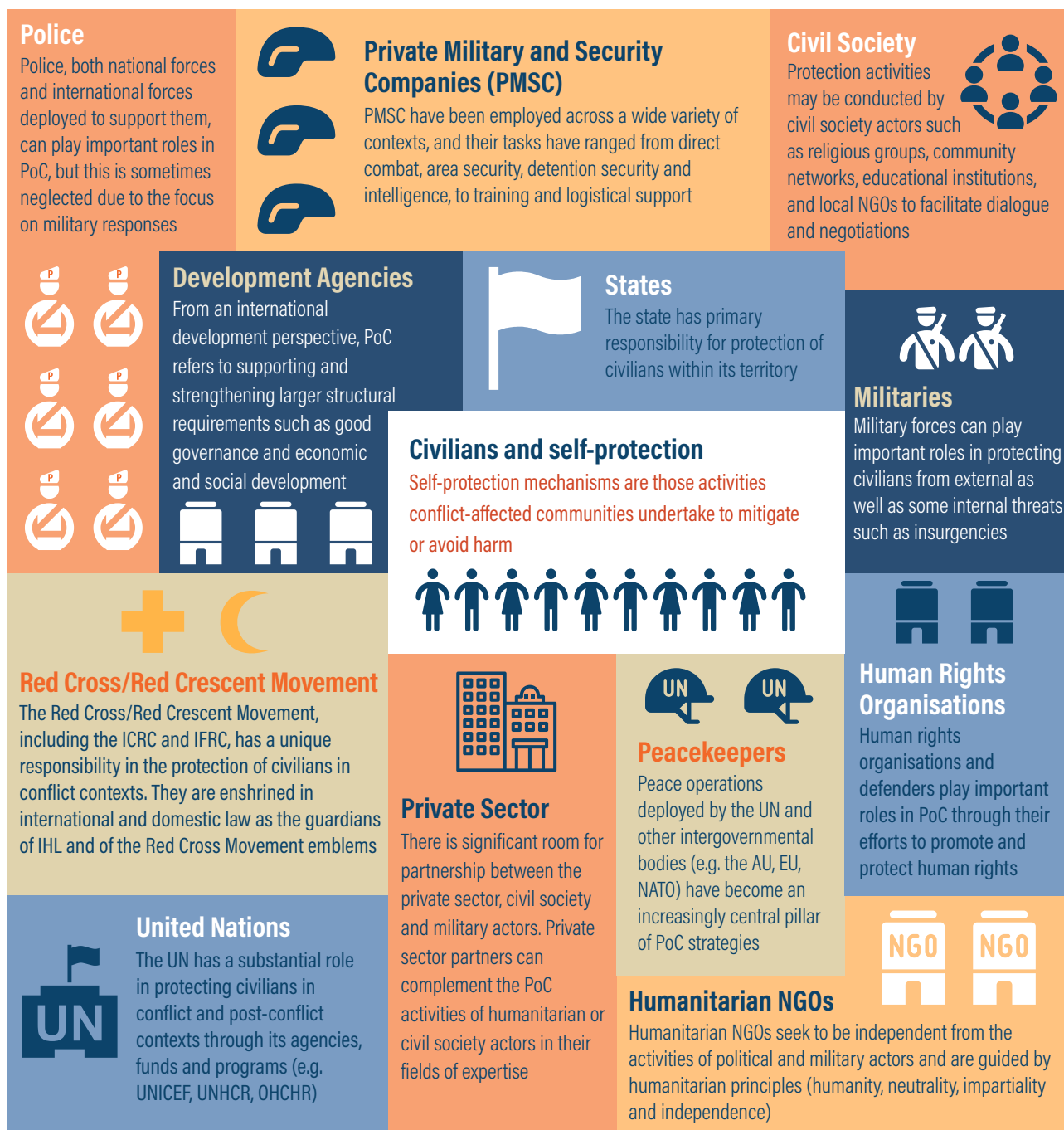
Element 1: Conflict Analysis, including structures, actors and dynamics	Element 2: Scenario Analysis. Use the conflict analysis model to assess future scenarios and build in flexibility and contingencies	Element 3: Strategies and options: Assess the impacts of possible scenarios and present recommendations
Structures ■ What are the key sources of tension and the underlying structural causes that could lead to structural instability in the society? ■ What structural factors can be regarded as promoting peace? ■ What is the government's institutional capacity to respond? *Actors* ■ Who and what are the key actors? ■ What are their interests? ■ What are their power bases and resources? ■ What are the roles of men and women in this conflict situation? ■ What are their specific needs, interests, and potential strengths? *Conflict dynamics* ■ What events, actions, and decisions can be identified as actual or potential trigger factors? ■ What consequences have these trigger factors had or will they have on structural causes and key actors? ■ What is/are the main mechanism(s) driving the conflict?	■ What does a given scenario mean in a given context? ■ What events must take place for this scenario to be realised? ■ What observable signs should appear if this particular scenario is to be realised? ■ What can development actors do to exert a positive influence over the course of events if a given scenario is realised?	■ What structural processes need to be supported in the interest of greater stability? ■ How can projects/programs support the roles of actors promoting peace and reduce the influence of those promoting violence? ■ What areas of development cooperation could have the greatest impact on the identified conflict situation(s)? ■ How can one ensure that the proposed development cooperation interventions are being carried out in a conflict-sensitive manner? ■ Is there a need for specific projects to address the identified conflict situation(s)?

CHAPTER 3: WHO PROTECTS CIVILIANS?

3.1 PROTECTION ACTORS

A range of actors protect civilians in conflict-affected societies. Figure 4 below shows the spectrum of actors involved in protecting civilians. Please refer to Annex C for detailed descriptors of these actors.

Figure 4: Protection Actors

Police
Police, both national forces and international forces deployed to support them, can play important roles in PoC, but this is sometimes neglected due to the focus on military responses

Private Military and Security Companies (PMSC)
PMSC have been employed across a wide variety of contexts, and their tasks have ranged from direct combat, area security, detention security and intelligence, to training and logistical support

Civil Society
Protection activities may be conducted by civil society actors such as religious groups, community networks, educational institutions, and local NGOs to facilitate dialogue and negotiations

Development Agencies
From an international development perspective, PoC refers to supporting and strengthening larger structural requirements such as good governance and economic and social development

States
The state has primary responsibility for protection of civilians within its territory

Militaries
Military forces can play important roles in protecting civilians from external as well as some internal threats such as insurgencies

Civilians and self-protection
Self-protection mechanisms are those activities conflict-affected communities undertake to mitigate or avoid harm

Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement
The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, including the ICRC and IFRC, has a unique responsibility in the protection of civilians in conflict contexts. They are enshrined in international and domestic law as the guardians of IHL and of the Red Cross Movement emblems

Private Sector
There is significant room for partnership between the private sector, civil society and military actors. Private sector partners can complement the PoC activities of humanitarian or civil society actors in their fields of expertise

Peacekeepers
Peace operations deployed by the UN and other intergovernmental bodies (e.g. the AU, EU, NATO) have become an increasingly central pillar of PoC strategies

Human Rights Organisations
Human rights organisations and defenders play important roles in PoC through their efforts to promote and protect human rights

United Nations
The UN has a substantial role in protecting civilians in conflict and post-conflict contexts through its agencies, funds and programs (e.g. UNICEF, UNHCR, OHCHR)

Humanitarian NGOs
Humanitarian NGOs seek to be independent from the activities of political and military actors and are guided by humanitarian principles (humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence)

In different contexts, protection actors will have different objectives that frame PoC efforts and have implications for coordination, targeting, resourcing, planning and sequencing. A protection actor will prioritise PoC differently depending on its role and responsibilities.

3.2 COORDINATING PoC EFFORTS

PoC roles and responsibilities vary across actors as a result of their mandates and the scope of their work. When actors are deployed together or in the same operational space it is important to coordinate efforts to prevent duplication or unmet needs.[17]

A coordinated, multi-agency response enables actors to:

- Appreciate and allow for different organisational mandates, principles, cultures and capacities

- Establish the relative strengths of different organisations, and the most suitable modalities for engaging in PoC

- Understand the limitations and boundaries of agencies, for example, non-humanitarian actors respect of humanitarian principles.

- Affirm the principle of distinction, which states that *'the parties to the conflict must at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants'* to allow each actor to achieve the greatest protective effect.

A multi-agency PoC response includes three critical stages: planning, monitoring and analysis, and ongoing coordination.

Planning
Decisions about how to allocate resources, where to position assets and capacities, and when or where to act are made by operational leadership in the joint planning phase.

- Military protection responses require focused and joint planning between all members of the coalition or peacekeeping deployment

- Planning must always consider the potential negative impacts of actions and incorporate risk mitigation strategies, so as to avoid harm to civilians

- Specific vulnerable groups, and their genders, abilities, ages, ethnic and minority groupings and religious needs, must be considered. This is where expert advisors can be invaluable to the planning process.

> Joint planning between military and humanitarian organisations is often impossible due to security and perception concerns. Information sharing for activity sequencing, however, is often acceptable. For example, the military may advise the time and location of an operation so that humanitarian workers can withdraw staff for safety, but also so they can plan post-operation humanitarian activities. Similarly, NGOs may share the location of their activities with the military to avoid being inadvertently targeted.

Monitoring and analysis
Collection of quality data to support strong analysis is crucial for PoC. Real-time, high-quality monitoring and reporting of threats can save lives and inform operational planning to meet civilian needs and mitigate risk.

Longer-term analysis can lead into best practice, lessons learned and more effective policy, all of which contributes to more sustainable and better PoC responses.

Coordination

The level of coordination needed will depend on the actors involved and the context. This is captured in the spectrum below, with close cooperation at one end and basic information sharing at the other. It is useful for all actors to know where their interaction sits on the spectrum and what is feasible in terms of joint planning and information sharing.
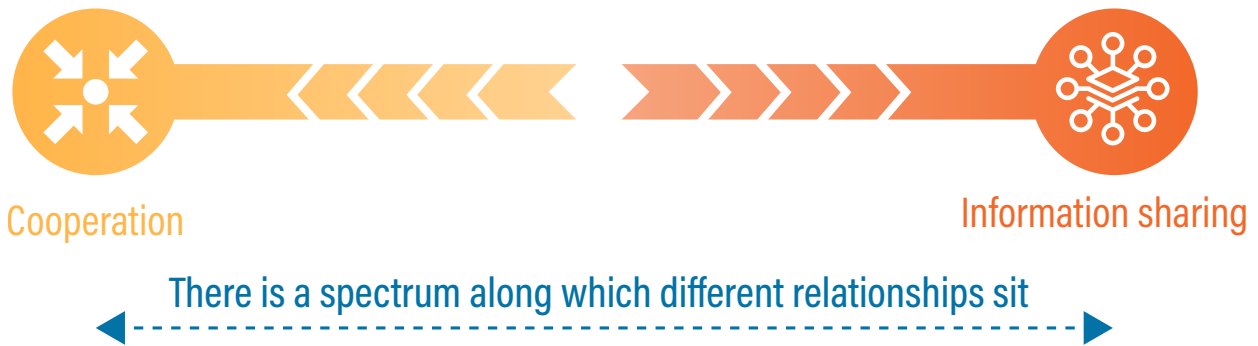
When referring to members of a coalition, elements of an integrated peacekeeping mission or a whole-of-government response, close coordination is the best way to protect civilians. The Australian PoC guidelines aim to ensure that Australian actors have a common understanding of PoC and the importance of a PoC approach, including harm reduction or mitigation strategies. This understanding is critical for providing effective PoC and a consistent approach to government efforts.

> Regardless of which actors are present, the host government retains the primary responsibility to protect all people within its borders and therefore will often lead coordination efforts. However, this is obviously inappropriate when they – or their proxies – are perpetrators of abuses against civilians.

Figure 5: PoC Coordination Spectrum

Cooperation

Information sharing

There is a spectrum along which different relationships sit

Coordination mechanisms

Table 2 gives examples of humanitarian and protection coordination mechanisms likely to exist in conflict-affected settings.

Table 2: Snapshot of Coordination Mechanisms

Global Protection Cluster	Several UN agencies, inter-governmental organisations and NGOs participate in the Global Protection Cluster, the inter-agency coordination platform for protection in humanitarian emergencies and disaster situations. The primary function of this cluster, which includes a wide range of protection actors, is to ensure humanitarian protection efforts have greater accountability, effectiveness, informed leadership, and are comprehensive.[18]
Field Protection Clusters	Field protection clusters are country-level coordination mechanisms that support needs assessment and gap analysis, planning and strategy development, advocacy, information management, monitoring and reporting, and protection mainstreaming.
Police–Military Coordination	Police and the military have specific and unique protective roles in peace and stabilisation operations (both UN and non-UN). In UN peacekeeping operations, tasks are divided according to the unique capabilities of military and police components. Police advisors and Formed Police Units take on training and rule of law protective aspects, while the military will engage in more direct physical protection.
Civil—Military Coordination	Specific personnel are employed to coordinate between civilian (including the police) and military actors. The military roles are referred to as Civil—Military Co-operation (CIMIC) officers, whereas the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) refers to the role as CMCoord. CMCoord has a specific humanitarian focus, and has tailored rules for civ-mil coordination, including for civilian use of military assets in humanitarian responses.
Coordination in Australia	The Australian Council for International Development has a Humanitarian Reference Group (HRG) which serves as the primary humanitarian agency coordination forum in Australia. The HRG covers contexts and areas including protracted crises, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian effectiveness, civil-military engagement, and protection.

CHAPTER 4: LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR PROTECTING CIVILIANS

4.1 INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURE AND THE PoC AGENDA

International human rights law

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) establishes the rights and freedoms applicable to all people. While not legally binding, it forms the basis for two human rights convenants (1966); The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and its optional protocol. Additional human rights treaties and protocols recognise protection of specific groups, such as women, children, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and migrant workers.[19]

International humanitarian law

International humanitarian law applies only during times of war. IHL is composed of the Geneva Conventions and optional protocols. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which have been universally ratified, are among the most important treaties governing the protection of victims of armed conflict. IHL appoints the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as its guardian.[20]

(International) refugee law

The UN's Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (or the 1951 Refugee Convention) is the foundation of international refugee law. The Convention defines the term 'refugee', establishes the principle that refugees should not be forcibly returned to a territory where their lives or freedom would be threatened, and sets out the duties of refugees and states' responsibilities toward them.[21]

International criminal law

International criminal law holds individuals accountable for specific crimes, including genocide, torture, crimes against humanity and war crimes. States have an obligation to prosecute individuals under domestic law, or extradite when appropriate. They also have the obligation to cooperate with international tribunals.[22] The International Criminal Court (ICC) has jurisdiction to try individuals for the mass atrocity crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

Australian legal context

The laws applicable to Australians deployed in international operations and engagements vary depending on context. For example, IHL only applies where, as a matter of law, an armed conflict exists and Australia is a party to it. Different rules apply in international and domestic armed conflicts.
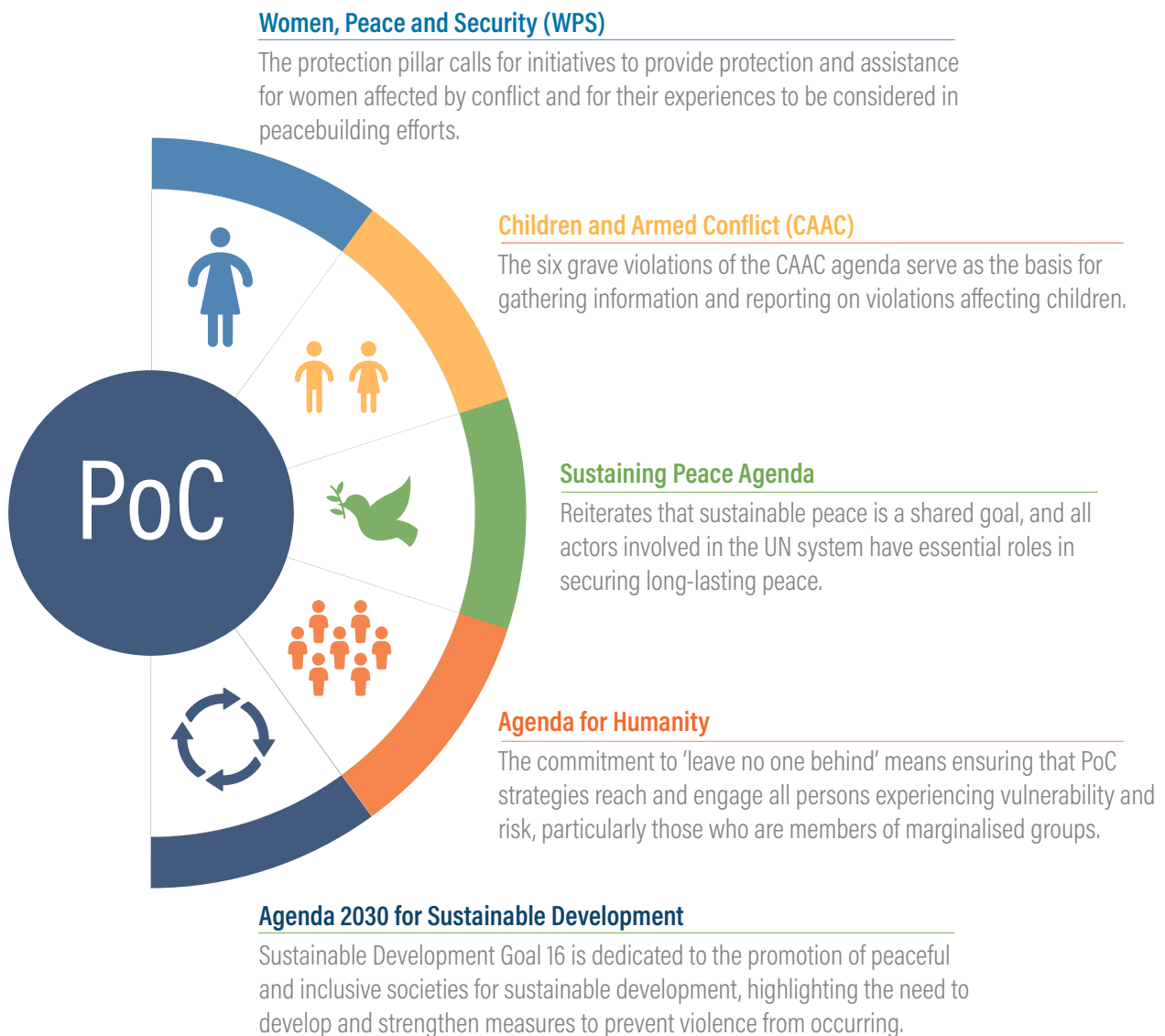
UN Security Council PoC architecture

The UNSC has advanced the protection agenda through various resolutions and presidential statements. The UNSC has a critical role to play in the implementation of PoC. These include cross-cutting thematic resolutions that elaborate the agenda for protecting and supporting the most vulnerable groups in conflict affected environments. The resolutions conceptualise PoC as an effort to prevent, mitigate or stop physical violence, but also facilitate humanitarian assistance, advocate to and provide training for national security agencies, support the collection of information around violations and pursuit of accountability for violations of IHL.

Protection of Civilians

4.2 PoC AND COMPLEMENTARY POLICIES AND AGENDAS

PoC overlaps and complements other frameworks and policy agendas.[23] Figure 6 below shows the relationship with five key examples.

Figure 6: Agendas complementing PoC

Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

The protection pillar calls for initiatives to provide protection and assistance for women affected by conflict and for their experiences to be considered in peacebuilding efforts.

Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC)

The six grave violations of the CAAC agenda serve as the basis for gathering information and reporting on violations affecting children.

Sustaining Peace Agenda

Reiterates that sustainable peace is a shared goal, and all actors involved in the UN system have essential roles in securing long-lasting peace.

Agenda for Humanity

The commitment to 'leave no one behind' means ensuring that PoC strategies reach and engage all persons experiencing vulnerability and risk, particularly those who are members of marginalised groups.

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development Goal 16 is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, highlighting the need to develop and strengthen measures to prevent violence from occurring.

CHAPTER 5: AUSTRALIA'S THREE FOCUS AREAS

Australia identified three focus areas for PoC:

- Protection through dialogue and engagement

- Provision of physical protection

- Establishment of a protective environment.

These focus areas provide a conceptual framework for the various ways that PoC can be operationalised. What follows is a suite of resources for actors implementing one or more of the focus areas, providing concrete examples and guidance. Whilst the resources correspond to the three identified areas in this handbook, some cut across several focus areas. Actions will need to be adapted to context and agreed by all relevant actors.

FOCUS AREA 1:
PROTECTION THROUGH DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT

The primary focus of dialogue and engagement is to prevent threats to civilians from escalating. Protection through dialogue and engagement includes:

- Political advocacy: persuading the government and other relevant actors to intervene to protect civilians

- Monitoring: public information and reporting on PoC

- Dialogue with a perpetrator or potential perpetrator

- Supporting international, national and community efforts for transitional justice.

Political advocacy: persuading the government and other relevant actors to intervene to protect civilians

Legal mechanisms and norms (such as IHL), as well as international bodies and institutions (such as the UN Human Rights Council – UNHRC), provide guidance on how stakeholders (governments, militaries, police, NGOs, etc.) should act to protect civilians. This scaffolding promotes consensus around acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. PoC will be strengthened as these norms become accepted and adopted.

Political dialogue and advocacy in the context of the relevant legal instruments and emerging norms can promote PoC. Once established at an international legal and policy level, protection priorities are translated into national and local-level interventions, such as crafting domestic law equivalents of human rights treaties.

In practice, this requires political advocacy within international institutions.

- Australia has been active on the international stage, for example, holding seats on both the UNHRC and the UNSC. PoC was strongly prioritised in Australia's 2013–14 term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.[24] *"Protection is not just at the core of the Council's responsibility. It should also be the Council's moral compass. More than any other issue, we will be judged by our actions and by our failures to act on protection challenges."*[25] (Australian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, HE Mr Gary Quinlan)

- Australia has engaged in military action – both through UN and non-UN peace operations – and has supported capacity-building in protection in regional countries (e.g. through police partnership programs). These interventions help to strengthen Australia's role as a promoter of protection principles at the global level.[26]

Case study: Political advocacy to achieve the Kigali Principles on PoC

The Kigali Principles on PoC are a non-binding set of principles for effective implementation of protection of civilians in UN peacekeeping. They were proposed at the High-level International Conference on the Protection of Civilians (Kigali, Rwanda, 2015). Rwanda, with the Netherlands and the United States of America, initiated the principles and undertook extensive political advocacy to gain political momentum and the first nine signatories. On 17 October 2016, Australia joined 37 other nations in endorsing the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians.[27]

Monitoring: public information and reporting on PoC

The international norms and standards contained in UN and regional human rights instruments, international humanitarian law and refugee law (see page 19) are the legitimate basis for any strengthening of human rights or monitoring compliance.

The fundamental human rights of all people are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Several additional treaties articulate specific rights or sets of rights, such as civil and political rights or the rights of the child. Each of the nine core international human rights treaties[28] will have its own committee of experts to monitor implementation by its state parties.

In situations of armed conflict, international humanitarian law is also applicable and compliance will be monitored by the ICRC.

International norms and standards are often translated into the domestic law of many countries. Human rights organisations from the international to the community level promote and monitor universal human rights and educate citizens so that they understand them. These advocacy, educative and monitoring roles take on particular importance in times of conflict or political turmoil, helping to reduce civilian vulnerability.

In practice, this requires understanding of, and engagement in, human rights monitoring mechanisms

- Australia participates in the UNHRC's Universal Periodic Review, a peer-to-peer process in which all UN member states can assess each other's human rights performance every four years. This process helps to increase transparency and limit impunity for states accused of human rights violations.

- At the regional level, Australia engages with the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, governments, forums and civil society to advocate for the creation and strengthening of national human rights bodies in the Asia Pacific region.[29]

- At the country level, monitoring and reporting mechanisms (MRM) are often established for specific thematic areas such as monitoring and reporting on grave violations committed against children in times of armed conflict (established with the adoption of UN Resolution 1612). Australia has supported this work globally through UNICEF, which has assisted MRM work in contexts including Afghanistan, the Philippines, the Central African Republic and Yemen.[30]

Factsheet: Role of Peacekeeping Missions in the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms (MRM)[31]

Civilian component: Peacekeeping missions implementing the MRM have Child Protection Advisers (CPAs) who conduct systematic monitoring, reporting and verification of grave violations against children. CPAs coordinate with all relevant mission components, and together with UNICEF child protection staff are MRM focal points for NGOs at the field level. CPAs also participate in coordination and act as the main contact point for NGOs wanting to engage with peacekeeping missions.

Uniformed component: On the ground, military and police peacekeepers patrol areas affected by conflict. Whilst not experts in child protection, peacekeepers can support the work of civilian CPAs related to the MRM by:

- Alerting civilian staff within peacekeeping missions about grave violations they witness or are informed of

- Facilitating contact between UN civilian staff and conflict-affected communities

- Providing security for monitoring and verification missions by UN civilian staff.

Dialogue with a perpetrator or potential perpetrator

International law requires that state and non-state actors allow people access to humanitarian assistance and protection. In situations where the behaviour of an actor undermines the protection of civilians, international actors may be involved in direct dialogue with a perpetrator or potential perpetrator.

In situations of armed conflict, IHL is applicable. The ICRC is specifically mandated to engage in dialogue with armed state and non-state actors to promote compliance with the law and to strengthen PoC.

In practice, this requires dialogue with perpetrators or potential perpetrators

- Dialogue is required with a range of actors to share concerns and develop solutions. International actors can play a critical role in enabling and supporting this dialogue, especially where conflict has created deep divisions.

- During the conflict in Sri Lanka (2002–06), Sri Lankan police and civilians had no channel to communicate with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam guerrillas. However, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission was respected by all actors and provided an important formal channel for dialogue between the parties.

- The appropriateness of dialogue versus other modes of action to meet protection objectives needs to be determined in the strategic planning process, and depends on the willingness and capacity of actors to change negative behaviours.

Guidance: Modes of Action[32]

Five main modes of action can be used to meet protection objectives:

1. **Denunciation** is pressuring authorities through public disclosure into meeting their obligations and protecting individuals or groups exposed to abuse.

2. **Mobilisation** is sharing information in a discreet way with selected people, bodies or states that have the capacity to influence the authorities to satisfy their obligations and to protect individuals and groups exposed to violations. This is likely to involve mobilising actors at different levels - high-level state authorities, civil society and communities. The choice of partners in any mobilisation strategy is critical.

3. **Persuasion** is convincing the authorities through further private dialogue to fulfil their obligations and to protect individuals and groups exposed to violations.

4. **Capacity building** is giving support to existing national and/or local structures to enable them to carry out their functions to protect individuals and groups.

5. **Substitution** is directly providing services or material asistance to people in need of protection.

You choice of mode in a given situation will be determined by the following considerations:

- the willingness of the authorities to respond themselves

- the capacity of authorities to respond

- the capacity of civilian communities to help themselves

- your agency's capacity to respond

- the political risk of different modes for the security and access of your own agency

- the duration of your action

- your experience from previous similar actions in this setting

- what others are choosing to do

Supporting international, national and community efforts for transitional justice

In societies recovering from conflict, transitional justice mechanisms can be vital to help prevent a return to hostilities in future. Transitional justice can be formal or informal, high level or grassroots based.

Transitional justice refers to "the ways countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large-scale or systematic human rights violations so numerous and so serious that the normal justice system will not be able to provide an adequate response."[33]

The inclusion of minority (including women's) perspectives is crucial for the success of transitional justice efforts.

Well-known transitional justice mechanisms include post-apartheid South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Rwanda's post-genocide community-based Gacaca courts.

In practice, this requires support to efforts focused on restoring post-conflict communities' confidence and stability by addressing past grievances.

- The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, which at peak strength deployed almost 100 justice advisors,[34] provided technical assistance to "tension trials", which involved the prosecution of crimes linked to the conflict. Australia also provided funding for a Solomon Islands Truth and Justice Commission,[35] and continues to support a justice sector program to build on RAMSI's work.

- In the Marawi conflict in the Philippines in 2017, Australia supported the Mindanao women's peace movement, a network of women's groups that elevates women's voices in the peace process.

- The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, which Australia supported, facilitated more than 1,400 community reconciliation processes. The procedure was based on the philosophy that community reconciliation was best achieved through a village-based, participatory mechanism that combined traditional justice, arbitration, mediation and aspects of criminal and civil law.[36]

Guidance: Guiding Principles for an Approach to Transitional Justice[37]

1. Support and actively encourage compliance with international norms and standards when designing and implementing transitional justice processes and mechanisms

2. Take account of the political context when designing and implementing transitional justice processes and mechanisms

3. Base assistance for transitional justice on the unique country context and strengthen national capacity to carry out community-wide transitional justice processes

4. Strive to ensure women's rights

5. Support a child-sensitive approach

6. Ensure the centrality of victims in the design and implementation of transitional justice processes and mechanisms

7. Coordinate transitional justice programmes with the broader rule of law initiatives

8. Encourage a comprehensive approach integrating an appropriate combination of transitional justice processes and mechanisms

9. Strive to ensure transitional justice processes and mechanisms take account of the root causes of conflict and repressive rule, and address violations of all rights

10. Engage in effective coordination and partnerships

Chadian man waiting for UN armoured vehicle to pass c. 2009 - Shutterstock

FOCUS AREA 2: PROVISION OF PHYSICAL PROTECTION

Provision of physical protection encompasses those activities primarily conducted by police and military actors to prevent, deter, pre-empt and respond to situations in which civilians are under threat of physical violence. Provision of physical protection includes:

- Analysis of threats and perpetrators to determine appropriate action

- Indirect protection activities

- Direct protection activities

- Do No Harm.

Analysis of threats and perpetrators

Actors will need to design and implement protection measures based on comprehensive risk analysis. This analysis requires an understanding of the threats, vulnerabilities and capacities of individuals and communities. Actors may target interventions at reducing the risk of a perpetrator taking action, or reducing the vulnerability of the civilian population or increasing its capacities.

In practice, actors will need to undertake a protection analysis.

In close consultation with communities, humanitarian and other actors, peacekeeping forces undertake threat and risk assessments that include:

- Analysis of the nature, deployments, modus operandi, capacity and intent of actual and potential perpetrators

- Distinguishing civilians from combatants

- Identifying priority populations for protection

- Assessing the capacity and intent of other protection actors

- Evaluating the risk associated with PoC threats.[38]

In all contexts, indirect protection efforts are based on a strong analysis of threats and perpetrators. These are typically undertaken to support PoC strategy development and will be informed by humanitarian and other actors.

Tool: Analysis of threats and perpetrators[39]

The below is an example format for analysis of threats and perpetators. Such an analysis would then provide the basis for development of PoC strategies.

- **Nature, identity, profiles**
  Perpetrators of violence against civilians include elements of national and international security forces, non-state armed groups, criminals and other civilians (e.g. inter-communal violence).

- **Motivation, interest or intent**
  Violence against civilians may be strategic and systematic, opportunistic or even accidental. It may be indiscriminate or targeted at an individual or group, and motivated by power, ideology or identity (cultural, ethnic, tribal or religious), fear, survival or greed.

- **Structure, capabilities and resources, preparedness**
  Command and control; human, material and financial means; supply lines.

- **Presence and deployments**

- **Relations**
  Political, security, economic and social supporters and allies; affiliation and clients.

- **Mode of action or tactics, techniques and procedures**
  Pattern of attacks or other forms of violence (including attacks on specific categories of vulnerable people such as women, children or internally displaced persons (IDPs)), movements of perpetrators, etc.

- **History**
  Monitoring of violations under national or international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law will provide further information regarding the gravity, intensity, pattern and scale of physical violence affecting civilians and enable trend and impact analysis. Beyond violations, missions will also track all casualties as a result of lawful actions by peacekeepers, state security forces and non-state armed groups. Collateral damage or casualties resulting from mines and explosive remnants of war will require specific attention in certain contexts.

Complementarity of Analyses

Protection actors should share their analyses in order to create a better understanding of protection issues and their impact on various populations at risk.

The perspectives and approaches of the various humanitarian and human rights actors doing protection work helps increase understanding and contributes to a more comprehensive response. Contextual analysis is critical for the effectiveness of that response. It should examine, primarily, the environment, the pattern of violations and abuses, perpetrators, duty bearers and their capacity and willingness to protect, as well as the impact on the populations affected. The information gathered should be shared as appropriate, with due respect for confidentiality requirements.[40]

Indirect protection – Defensive protection

Security forces can provide physical protection indirectly. The indirect provision of physical protection relies on deterrence, defensive strategies and posture, including "protection through presence".[41] Indirect protection may be most effective when the violence is on a more discrete and individual scale, and therefore much harder to detect and deter, such as conflict-related sexual violence and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Security forces can, and should, take appropriate measures, based on good intelligence, to deter any party from committing violence through posture, performance or dialogue. Strategies may include deployment to block aggressors, patrols, creating and defending safe areas, and the establishment, monitoring and enforcing of weapon exclusion zones.

In broad terms, indirect defensive protection can be split into mobile and static protection. Mobile protection can be in the form of patrolling or supporting aid convoys, whilst static can involve protecting specific sites, such as dedicated PoC centres.

In practice, presence of security forces and other protection actors can deter or dissuade against abuses.

- Australia has supported UN peacekeeping missions and non-UN regional interventions that have prioritised an indirect approach to protection, rather than offensive action, including in Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Bougainville, PNG.[42] Australian military personnel are currently deployed to the Middle East (UN Truce Supervision Organisation, and the Multinational Force and Observers) and to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).[43] As at July 2019, Australia had 36 personnel actively deployed with peacekeeping missions.[44]

- Beyond peacekeeping missions, indirect protection can be achieved by the presence of human rights monitoring, electoral monitoring and humanitarian agency presence. Unarmed field missions with specific mandates have provided protection in situations including Colombia, Sri Lanka, Haiti and Timor-Leste.

Tool: Protection presence - Key methods[45]

Key methods for achieving effective visibility include:

- developing other 'institutionalised' mechanisms of presence, such as regular points of contact and scheduled rounds

- responding rapidly to crisis situations with visible visits showing solidarity and concern

- deploying sub-offices throughout the territory, where they can be seen and visited, and from which field officers can easily visit state and provincial institutions as well as isolated rural communities

- carrying out regular visits to conflict-prone rural areas, and guaranteeing follow-up to prevent reprisals

- when necessary and feasible, providing direct accompaniment for persons, organisations or communities at high risk

- taking advantage of non-protective programmes (such as humanitarian assessment, educational programmes or medical missions) to emphasise the protective role of international presence

- seeking ways to extend the 'visibility message' of the international presence to local personnel and local partner organisations, such that their own visibility enhances civilian protection without causing security risks to themselves

Somali female police officers attend the AMISOM Female Peacekeepers' Conference in Mogadishu on December 12, 2016. AMISOM Photo / Ilyas Ahmed

Direct protection – Offensive protection

Direct, offensive military operations with protection mandates are at the most robust end of the protection spectrum. Military forces may pursue physical PoC, when appropriate and authorised to do so, through offensive force. They aim to deter threats to civilians (from state and non-state actors) by responding to violent attacks and SGBV with all necessary means, up to and including the use of lethal force, if permissible.

When military campaigns are justified as necessary to protect civilians, failure to do so within the force's capabilities and area of operations is likely to severely reduce its credibility among the local population and internationally, exacerbating the difficulties in operating effectively in those settings.

In practice, direct offensive military operations may be required to protect civilians.

- Australia has participated in numerous direct offensive military operations designed to protect civilians. Australia launched military operations in Iraq in August 2014 in an effort to protect civilians as part of the Global Coalition against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), with the goal to *"help protect Iraq and its people from [ISIS] attacks inside Iraq and from across the border"*.[46]

- In May 2017 Australia provided support to the Philippines Armed Forces in their efforts to contain the threat of ISIS-affiliated combatants in Mindanao. In the Marawi conflict in the Philippines, Australia contributed two AP-3C Orion surveillance aircraft for intelligence during the siege.

Tool: Example format for Offensive Operations Brief [47]

I. Information Brief

    a. Target Analysis

        i. What

        ii. Why

        iii. Where

        iv. Who

        v. When (immediate, when ready, contingency, etc.)

    b. Legal Basis

    c. Impact analysis

        i. Political (Pros and Cons)

        ii. Socio-economic (Pros and Cons)

        iii. Protection of Civilians (Pros and Cons)

        iv. Security (Pros and Cons)

II. Decision Brief

    a. Force Commander's Assessment and Intent

    b. Options

        i. Option 1

            1. Outline

            2. Pros and Cons

            3. Potential Collateral Damage

        ii. Option 2

    c. Force Commander's Recommendation

    d. Consultation

        i. UNHQ

        ii. National/Regional Partners

    e. SRSG's decision

III. Action Brief

    a. Tasking

        i. Force HQ

        ii. Civilian pillars

        iii. DMS

        iv. HoO

    b. Communications

        i. What

        ii. When

        iii. To who

        iv. By who

    c. Operational Security

        i. Timeline for release of information / coordination / action

Drafted by: *Consulted with:*   *Approved by:*

Do No Harm

The principle of Do No Harm underpins all approaches to protecting civilians. Within the physical protection sphere, Do No Harm is intrinsically linked to both IHL and international human rights frameworks. These laws set out how parties to the conflict should engage. For example, IHL affects targeting rules, because civilian infrastructure (schools, hospitals, etc.) and infrastructure with dual uses are exempt from military action.

Military or police responses with a protection objective should have zero tolerance for 'collateral damage', even when in pursuit of a particularly valuable campaign objective. Reprisals against civilians perceived to be cooperating with an armed intervention must also be considered, and plans to minimise this risk developed. The Do No Harm principle may affect operational planning significantly, which sets police and military actions with protection aims apart from other types of military campaigns.

The principle of distinction is applicable to a Do No Harm approach; it states that the general population should be able to easily distinguish armed actors from humanitarian workers and other civilians. This is for the safety of aid workers, and those that they assist, but also to ensure the preservation of humanitarian space.

Do No Harm should also be seen through the lens of groups with particular vulnerability: how is the conflict, and the planned response, affecting minorities and those with specific protection concerns?

In practice, the Do No Harm principle should be applied in all military and civil protection efforts.

- As part of the RAMSI mission in the Solomon Islands, once security had been established, the Australian Defence Force took a supporting role to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in the regional stabilisation effort.[48]

- Australia deployed military gender advisors to UNMISS. Gender advisors can assist in planning operations to minimise harm to communities and considering the potential harms to different groups within the population.[49]

- A Do No Harm methodology, developed by CDA, is widely used by humanitarian and development organisations. World Vision, for example, applied the framework in Bunta, Indonesia, where tensions between Muslim and Christian groups remained high after conflict in 2001. The analysis enabled World Vision to understand the dividers and connectors and to adapt their intervention to ensure they were not exacerbating tensions.[50]

Tool: Do No Harm Analysis[51]

A Do No Harm analysis maps the interactions of assistance and conflict and can be used to plan, monitor and evaluate humanitarian programs. It supports practitioners to identify, categorise and organise information to understand the impact of programming on conflict dynamics.

Step 1: Understand the context of conflict – identify the geographic location and social space relevant to your assistance program. Identify which inter-group conflicts have caused violence or are dangerous and may escalate into violence, and analyse how the assistance project relates to the context of the conflict.

Step 2: Analyse dividers and tensions – examine the conflict setting from the perspective of causes of tension, such as ideological differences, resource scarcity or ethnic tensions, that could be exploited and thus become dividers.

Step 3: Analyse connectors and local capacities for peace – there are always factors that connect people, even in situations of conflict. These could be common language, religion, or shared social spaces.

Step 4: Analyse the assistance program – analyse the details of the program; details are important in determining impact (positive or negative). Questions to ask include

- Where and why is assistance offered?
- Who are the staff? How were they hired?
- Who are the intended recipients of assistance? By what criteria are they included?

Step 5: Analyse the program's Impact on dividers and connectors

- What impact does the project have on the tensions, dividers and connectors?
- How and why were dividers and connectors affected?
- Does the project reduce or increase tensions/support or undermine connectors?
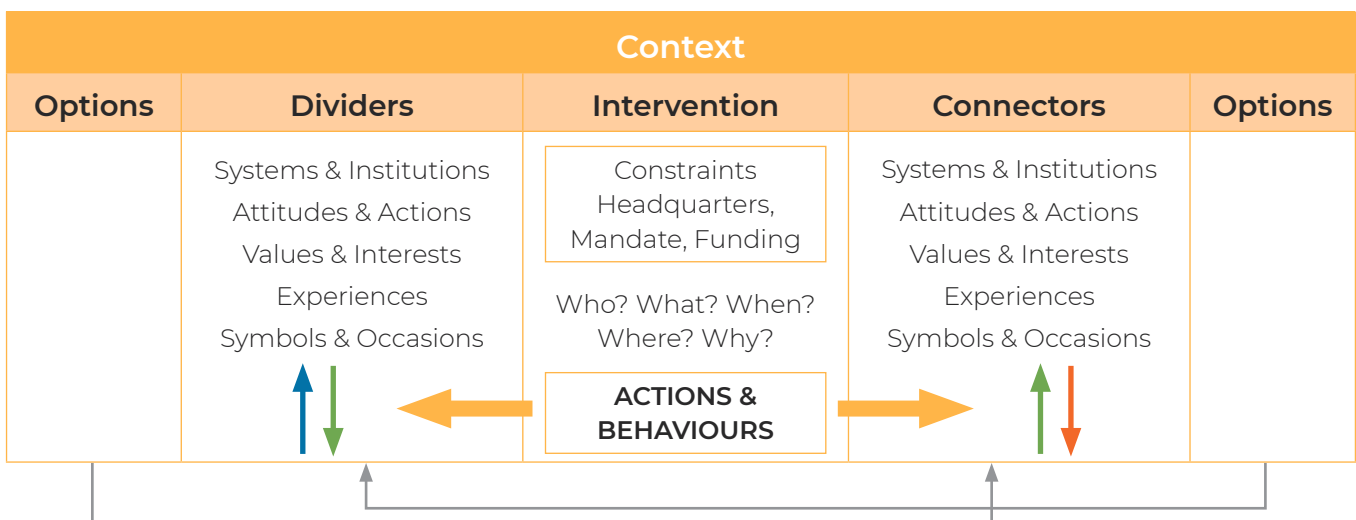
Step 6: Consider (and generate) program options

- **If** an element of the program exacerbates dividers or sources of tension, or
- **If** an element of the program erodes connectors
  - ➔ **THEN** *generate as many options as possible to weaken dividers and strengthen connectors*

Step 7: Test programming options, and if needed, redesign project – Test the options you've generated.

- What is the probable impact on dividers or sources of tension?
- What is the probable impact on connectors?
  - Use the optimal options to redesign the project.

THE DO NO HARM FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF AID ON CONFLICT

Context				
Options	**Dividers**	**Intervention**	**Connectors**	**Options**
	Systems & Institutions Attitudes & Actions Values & Interests Experiences Symbols & Occasions	Constraints Headquarters, Mandate, Funding Who? What? When? Where? Why? **ACTIONS & BEHAVIOURS**	Systems & Institutions Attitudes & Actions Values & Interests Experiences Symbols & Occasions	

Explaining the controversy around Hearts and Minds operations

In Afghanistan, Coalition and International Security Assistance Forces delivered humanitarian assistance as part of a 'hearts and minds' strategy to gain the support of the local populations. Small teams combining civilian and military personnel, called Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) delivered humanitarian, development and reconstruction assistance.

According to humanitarian actors working in the same space, these activities blurred the line between military and humanitarian action, endangering humanitarian workers.[52] One consequence was the Taliban's targeted killing of five Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) workers due to the perception that MSF served American interests.

When explaining their decision to withdraw their team from Afghanistan, MSF denounced the Coalition forces as endangering humanitarian action. Coalition forces had distributed leaflets to communities in Southern Afghanistan demanding people pass information to Coalition forces, representing this as necessary for the ongoing distribution of aid.

The linking of military action and humanitarian aid is an example of the potential to cause harm in highly politicised conflict-affected settings.

FOCUS AREA 3: ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT

The establishment of a protective environment involves creating conditions that enhance the safety and rights of civilians. It is usually achieved through supporting the state that bears the primary responsibility for protecting civilians. However, when governments and their proxies are responsible for abuses, protection actors must work with other partners, including the affected communities, to build resilience and enhance protection. An optimal protective environment occurs at the local level but is reinforced through policy and norms at the national, regional and international levels.

Establishment of a protective environment requires a long-term intervention and engagement. It is linked to development and stabilisation goals and includes:

- Creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance
- Laying foundations for the return to peace and the rule of law
- Capacity-building in the state security and justice sector
- Capacity-building for civil society
- Support at the national, regional and international level.

AusAID Development Adviser Jeremy Guthrie and DFAT Political Adviser Kali Graham conduct a shura with local Afghan tribal leaders in West Dorafshan, Uruzgan Province. Photo: Cass Morgan, AusAID

Creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance

In conflict contexts, humanitarian access to vulnerable communities is vital for the delivery of food, water and basic medical and dignity services. National and international NGO personnel deliver humanitarian aid using clearly marked vehicles and clothing to distinguish themselves from combatants.

During hostilities, aid workers can negotiate access to affected civilians directly with armed groups without affecting their humanitarian, non-combatant status. Ceasefires can also be declared to grant humanitarian access to communities.

When delivering humanitarian assistance, all affected communities should be considered equally, without regard for their race, ethnicity, religion or gender. Aid has been known to be captured by belligerents and used for their benefit and to extend the conflict; humanitarian professionals are best placed to suggest ways to minimise this risk.

While coordination with military peacekeepers to ensure effective aid delivery is essential, this is context dependent; most humanitarian aid agencies consider armed escorts a means of last resort, due to the risk of negative community perceptions and being drawn into conflict.

In practice, military and civilian assistance can facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

- In August 2014, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) assisted in the emergency provision of humanitarian aid to civilians fleeing ISIS insurgents and stranded on a mountain top in northern Iraq. The RAAF delivered enough food and water rations to sustain 3700 people for 24 hours.[53]

- In 2016, a civilian Australia Assists deployee played a pivotal role in negotiating humanitarian access to over 50,000 people stranded on the Jordan–Syria frontier when the border was closed due to an ISIS attack.

- Since its establishment in July 2011, UNMISS, to which Australia contributes, has provided armed escorts to accompany South Sudanese people leaving PoC sites, for example when collecting firewood or attending funerals.

Case Study: PoC sites[54]

PoC sites are intended to provide physical protection within a UN mission base. PoC sites emerged in South Sudan in 2015 when hundreds of thousands of people sought protection. UNMISS has been criticised for focusing its resources too heavily on PoC sites and neglecting PoC elsewhere in South Sudan. For example, the number of security personnel mandated to protect the sites was disproportionate to the security needs of the rest of the country. Very few organisations operated outside of PoC sites due to access and safety concerns. Protection of people within the sites was also challenging, with direct targeting of the sites by active combatants of the conflict.

A Norweigan Refugee Council analysis of the lessons learned with respect to PoC sites in South Sudan suggests that in order to be successful, peacekeeping missions within a PoC site must:

■ Chapter VII Authority, which contains provisions related to *"Action with Respect to the Peace and Acts of Aggression"*[55]

■ Have PoC as the first priority, including in resource allocation and decision-making within the mission

■ Clarify that the PoC responsibility applies irrespective of the source of the threat (including when perpetrated by government actors)

■ Clearly articulate that protecting PoC sites should entail one component of the protection mandate, but not its entirety – the PoC mandate should apply to civilians across the country

■ Exclude any elements that could be seen to contradict the protection mandate, namely tasks relating to supporting the state or capacity-building.

Creating conditions for the return to peace and the rule of law

The creation of a protective environment extends beyond immediate physical security. Activities designed to foster a protective environment tend to be longer term in nature, and can be part of specific development or peace-building programs separate to targeted protection work.[56] Because states retain primary responsibility for PoC, assistance is often targeted at supporting state capacity and state institutions to consolidate peace and build a peaceful and just society. Inclusion of minority and vulnerable voices is imperative for the building of community trust and lasting peace. Examples could include support for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes; support for national human rights monitoring mechanisms; the creation of conditions suitable for the return of displaced persons; and security sector reform.

In practice, creation of protective environments requires long-term efforts working with development programs to strengthen and support national government and civil society.

- RAMSI's programs in the Solomon Islands helped to restore law and order, rebuild national institutions, stabilise the economy, improve service delivery and secure the 2014 elections. Importantly, they also included support to family violence eradication programs.[57]

- In Afghanistan, from 2006, Australia contributed to the Uruzgan PRT, particularly in the management of large-scale development and infrastructure programs focusing on health, education, water and agriculture to support community development and promote peace.[58]

- The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, in its mandate to *"develop a credible, professional and impartial police service"*, established the Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste. From the outset, gender concerns were central to the agenda, for example with a target of at least 20% of recruits to be women, and addressing SGBV as an urgent priority, including through building capacity of officers to interview victims of sexual abuse.[59]

Case study

DDR programs have become commonplace in UN Peace Operations. In recent years, significant progress has been made to end the use of child soldiers in South Sudan. Through the combined efforts of the Government of South Sudan, the UN and partners, over 28,000 children, primarily boys, have been released from armed forces. In September 2019, UNICEF and partners launched a practical guide for those working specifically on reintegration issues for girls in South Sudan, acknowledging this as a critical gap.

Capacity-building in the state security and justice sector

In creating conditions for the rule of law, building the capacity of state security services warrants particular attention because they are central to upholding the protective environment for civilians. Well-trained and professional security services are the front line of the state's efforts to protect civilians through the prevention, cessation and investigation of violence. State security services include the police and military, as well as state paramilitary and civilian functions. Interventions may include IHL training for the military, police training, and strengthening accountability mechanisms. There is a close and sequential relationship between the security and justice services, and strengthening their capacity is mutually reinforcing. A strong, independent and impartial justice sector can reduce impunity, and foster trust among civilians that abuses against them will be recorded and prosecuted, improving access to justice. This is closely related to the idea of transitional justice, as discussed above.

In practice, a protective environment is built through the enhanced capacity of national governments and state security services.

- Multiple actors work with national governments to strengthen key institutions that protect civilians.

- The RAMSI intervention in the Solomon Islands sought to restore and improve the capacity of the national justice sector. "RAMSI worked with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, Attorney-General's Chambers, Law Reform Commission, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Public Solicitor's Office, Police Prosecutions Directorate and National Judiciary (including the High Court and the Magistrates' Court) over the life of the program, to improve law and justice services in the Solomon Islands."[60]

- The AFP has a strong track record of supporting capacity-building in police forces throughout the region. The AFP has bilateral partnerships with policing services in the Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Nauru, Tonga, Vanuatu and PNG, in addition to regional programs.[61]

- The UN Police supported the operations of the United Nations Mission in Liberia from 2003 until the mission's closure in 2017. The UN Police, including formed units, continuously assisted in maintenance of law and order throughout Liberia, and provided backup to the Liberia National Police when necessary. In addition, UN Police Advisors have served as mentors and provided daily advisory services to the Liberia National Police Headquarters and Training Academy, as well as operating from individual police stations around Monrovia. Australia contributed to the mission by supporting the UN Police Commissioner.

- The International Red Cross Red and Crescent Movement works with military and police actors to remind them of their obligations under domestic and international law and discuss how their powers can be exercised with respect to their responsibilities to the population. Other international organisations advocate for understanding and application of various human rights conventions that will build the protective environment for everyone. This includes advocacy for the rights of specific vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, minority groups or children.

Guidance: Joint Protection Teams

Joint Protection Teams (JPTs) are multi-sectoral teams comprised of representatives from civil society, military, police, authorities and humanitarians. The United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or MONUSCO, uses JPTs, the most notable use of the approach.

JPTs are formed in response to incidents such as rebel attacks or population displacements, and are designed to investigate and assess protection risks. Team members engage in consultations and generate protection-specific recommendations. Teams often also develop detailed community protection plans highlighting priorities and contingency plans for liaising with local leaders in the event of armed attacks.[62]

JPTs enhance the mission's capacity to protect civilians by:

- Working with military commanders to address protection needs, including SGBV

- Promote all parties' respect for IHL

- Set up networks to increase communication with communities

- Offer protection advice where necessary

- Analyse political and social dynamics of communities for protection planning

- Anticipate needs and ensure appropriate measures are taken within the capacities of both civil and military components of the mission. [63]

Capacity-building for civil society

A strong civil society sector is vital to a protective environment. Civil society organisations (CSOs) – including religious organisations, NGOs and legal associations – help to maintain checks and balances on state power, monitor human rights violations, and ensure that marginalised voices are heard through sustained advocacy efforts. Development programs may partner with CSOs as project implementers, or they may be included as community representatives in peace negotiations or transitional justice mechanisms. Due to their roles as human rights monitors, community advocates and community development practitioners, CSOs are critical to building peace. A strong civil society network can also help the community to protect itself, through early warning and community conflict resolution mechanisms, in times of crisis. It builds resilience in inclusive and culturally appropriate ways.

In practice, civil society organisations are often best placed to develop systems and approaches to community self-protection.

UN peacekeeping operations have generated some strong practice in harnessing civil society for community self-protection. In the DRC, the Civil Affairs section of the UN Stabilisation Mission created several community protection mechanisms which have since been replicated in other contexts. These included:

■ Community liaison assistants – Congolese community liaisons embedded with international peacekeepers to serve as conduits for dealing with concerns

■ Community alert networks – which provided community leaders with communication devices to alert area peacekeepers to threats

■ Community protection plans – UN experts worked with communities threatened with physical violence to devise appropriate and achievable plans.

In the Philippines in 2017, Australia worked with International Alert to analyse data about violence and conflict in Mindanao and supported production of the video *Honor Stories of Valor in Marawi*, which documented the heroic community self-protection efforts of The Suicide Squad, an unarmed group which rescued approximately 1,800 people from the urban conflict zone.

Case Study: Community-based protection

In 2009, Oxfam launched an innovative protection program in the DRC, bringing together communities, authorities and security services around shared protection goals. At the heart of the model was the establishment of community protection structures – democratically elected networks tasked with outlining threats people faced in a specific area and engaging with authorities on how to implement them via a *Community Protection Plan.*

Community protection structures were comprised of three key elements:

- A community protection committee (with six male and six female members)

- A women's forum – a dedicated safe space for 15 women to safely discuss sensitive protection issues

- Change agents – 20 individuals from surrounding villages, responsible for feeding information into community protection committee discussions about protection threats or issues in villages.[64]

Community-based protection models should not be considered a one-size-fits-all approach. Any action should be informed by detailed analysis of the risks facing a community and a nuanced understanding of community structures and dynamics.[65]

Emergency relief supplies, including water, food and shelter, are unloaded from a Royal Australian Air Force aircraft. Photo: Roger Wheatle

Support at the national, regional and international levels

A protective environment within a state is reinforced through national, regional and international mechanisms and norms. The avoidance of reputational damage can be a major incentive to a national government, and regional bodies in particular can help to 'set the bar' for acceptable behaviour. Capacity-building at these more strategic levels can take the form of establishing or strengthening national and regional human rights institutions, and implementing Universal Periodic Reporting and treaty monitoring body recommendations.

Support for prominent international justice mechanisms, including the ICC – which tries individuals for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and aggression – is also important.[66]

In practice, work on PoC needs to happen at multiple levels – national, regional and global.

■ Education and training at all levels helps to build monitoring capacity, but also awareness of atrocity crimes with an aim to increasing community protection and resilience.[67] The Australian government funds training through the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, upskilling community organisations, national governments and regional organisations in the prevention of atrocities.

■ In 2018, Australia joined ASEAN countries in the Sydney Declaration, declaring *"We renew our resolve to promote and protect the human rights of our peoples, including through the work of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the Australian Human Rights Commission as well as the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children. We will continue to enhance our dialogue and cooperation on the promotion and protection of human rights as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other applicable international human rights instruments to which we are all parties."*[68] While Australia is not a member of ASEAN, statements such as this contribute to a regional protective environment, and demarcate acceptable – and unacceptable – regional behaviour.

■ In line with its commitment to international law, the prevention of conflict and the restoration of peace and security, Australia fully supports the ICC, and as Chair of the Like-Minded Group played a prominent role in the negotiation of the Rome Statute establishing the court.[69] Australia has continued to champion the goals of the court and global access to justice by assisting other countries to ratify and implement the Rome Statute and contributing to the Court's Trust Fund for the Participation of Least Developed Countries. Further, Australia was a principal proponent of the Trust Fund for Victims and the adoption of provisions on the crime of aggression (2010).

Factsheet: Overview of Regional human rights bodies

Regional human rights systems, consisting of regional instruments and mechanisms, play an important role in the promotion and protection of human rights. Regional human rights instruments (e.g. treaties, conventions, declarations) help to localise international human rights norms and standards, reflecting the particular human rights concerns of the region. Regional human rights mechanisms (e.g. commissions, special rapporteurs, courts) then help to implement these instruments on the ground.

The existence of an effective regional human rights system is of fundamental importance to the promotion and protection of human rights, as it:

- Assists national governments with the implementation of their international human rights obligations; for example, assisting with the implementation of the recommendations of treaty bodies, special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review;

- Provides people with more accessible mechanisms for the protection of their human rights, once national remedies have been exhausted;

- Helps to raise peoples awareness of their human rights, placing them in a more localised context and reflecting their particular human rights concerns;

- Provides regional input to the development of international human rights standards and the improvement of international human rights mechanisms;

- Helps national governments to better address regional human rights concerns that cross national borders; for example, human rights concerns related to migration, transnational crime and environmental disasters.

Currently, the three most established regional human rights systems exist in Africa, the Americas and Europe.

CONCLUSION

The protection of civilians caught up in situations of armed conflict, but also preceding and following periods of violence, has become a major priority for the Australian government in recent years.

This handbook provides an important next step in operationalising the commitments that the Australian government articulated in its Australian Guidelines for the Protection of Civilians (2015). It explains the key concepts and provides guidance for working across the range of actors that may be involved in PoC in a wide range of contexts.

The most practical component of the handbook outlines key activities and tools for implementing Australia's three identified focus areas. Decisions on which activities and tools are most appropriate will need to be taken in-country with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the best approach is taken to protecting civilians in context. A summary of focus areas and related resources is provided in Table 3 on page 48.

Thai UN military peacekeepers in Mukjar, Southern Sudan - September 16, 2011. Shutterstock.

Table 3: Summary of focus areas and resources

Focus Area	Activity	Resource
Protection through dialogue and engagement	**Political advocacy**	**Case study:** Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians
	Monitoring: public information and reporting on PoC	**Fact sheet:** Role of peacekeeping missions in the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
	Dialogue with a perpetrator or potential perpetrator	**Guidance:** Modes of action
	Supporting international, national and community efforts for transitional justice	**Guidance:** Guiding principles for approach to transitional justice
Provision of physical protection	**Analysis of threats and perpetrators**	**Tool:** Format for analysis of threats and perpetrators
	Indirect protection activities	**Guidance:** Protection presence - key methods
	Direct protection activities	**Tool:** Example format for Offensive Operations Brief
	Do No Harm	**Tool:** Do No Harm analysis
Establishment of a protective environment	**Creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance**	**Case study:** PoC sites
	Creating conditions for the return to peace and the rule of law	**Case study:** Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programs
	Capacity-building in the state security and justice sectors	**Guidance:** Joint Protection Teams
	Capacity-building for civil society	**Case study:** Community-based protection
	Support at the national, regional and international levels	**Fact Sheet:** Overview of regional human rights bodies

ANNEX A: ANALYTICAL TOOLS TO INFORM PoC WORK

PoC Toolkits

- "Protection of Civilians Essential Guidance and Tools." Author: Global Protection Cluster. Available here.

Child Protection

- "ARC Resource Pack (Actions for the rights of the children)." Author: Save the Children. Available here.

- "The Toolkit for Child Friendly Spaces in Humanitarian Settings." Authors: World Vision and IFRC. Available here.

- "Girl Shine." Author: International Rescue Committee. Available here.

- Protecting Children on the Move: A guide to programming for children affected by migration and displacement. Author: Save the Children. Available here.

Community protection

- "Community security handbook." Author: Saferworld UK. Available here.

- "Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Toolkit Appraising the use of social protection in addressing large-scale shocks." Author: DFID. Available here.

Conflict analysis

- "Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding: tools for peace and conflict impact assessment." Author: Saferworld UK. Available here. This toolkit has an excellent annex detailing a wide variety of conflict assessment tools.

- "Manual for conflict analysis" Author: Swedish International Development Agency. Available here.

- "Conflict Analysis Framework: Field Guidelines and Procedures." Author: Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. Available here.

- "Mapping Political Context: Power Analysis." Author: ODI. Available here.

- "Applied Political Economy Analysis: A Problem-Driven Framework." Author: ODI. Available here.

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

- DDR Resources. Author: Ethnic Peace Resources Project. Available here.

Do No Harm Analysis

■ "Do No Harm: A Brief Introduction from CDA". Author: CDA. Available here.

Gender

■ "Beyond consultations: a tool for meaningfully engaging with women in fragile and conflict-affected states". Author: Saferworld UK. Available here.

■ "Gender analysis of conflict." Author: Saferworld UK. Available here.

■ "Minimum Standards for Gender in Emergencies." Author: Oxfam. Available here.

Vulnerability

■ "Vulnerability and risk assessment" Author: Oxfam. Available here.

ANNEX B: FURTHER READING AND GUIDANCE ON PoC

Peace operations (i.e. multi-agency, various contexts)

- [Protection of Civilians: Implementing Guidelines for Military Components of United Nation Peacekeeping Missions (DPKO)](#)

- [Guidelines on the Role of United Nations Police in Protection of Civilians](#)

- [UN DPKO/DFS Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping](#)

- UK peacekeeping doctrine, JDN 5/11, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/432647/20150427-DCDC_JDN_5_11_Archived.pdf

- PKSOI United States Army War College, Protection of Civilians Military Reference Guide, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/176009/PoC_Military_reference_guide_Final.pdf

- NATO PSO doctrine, p.2-8, para 0225, http://nso.nato.int/nso/zPublic/ap/AJP-3.4.1%20EDA%20V1%20E.pdf

More general PoC in armed conflict:

- [OCHA Occasional Policy Paper, 'Building A Culture of Protection: 20 Years of UNSC POC'](#)

- Adamczyk, Sarah. 2019. 'Twenty years of protection of civilians at the UN Security Council', Humanitarian Policy Group Policy Brief 74, London: ODI. https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12709.pdf

- UK 2011 [National Strategy on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict](#)

  - [2011 Annual report summarises the UK's work on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict](#)

  - [2012 Annual report summarises the UK's work on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict](#)

- [Swiss 2013 National Strategy on POC](#)

- NATO, 2016. 'NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians'. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133945.htm

Other:

- Protection of Civilians, Global Protection Cluster, http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/themes/protection-of-civilians/

- ACMC, 2014, [WPS: An Intro Handbook](#)

ANNEX C: PROTECTION ACTORS

Civilians and self-protection	There is a growing appreciation of the importance of the measures taken by the civilian population to protect themselves in situations of conflict where state protection mechanisms may be absent, or even predatory. Self-protection mechanisms are those activities undertaken by conflict affected communities in order to mitigate or avoid a threat of harm.[70] Common examples include community-based organisations specialising in local protection issues, or in the protection of particular vulnerable groups (women, children, ethnic or linguaistcally-based groups, disability protection etc). Also more informal arrangements based on a 'Neighbourhood Watch' model, where community members band together for self-protection. .
States	The state has primary responsibility for protection of civilians within its territory. This responsibility is founded upon IHRL, IHL and reinforced under the R2P. These protection responsibilities are generally exercised through state security and government protection services, including state protection actors such as child welfare offices, and the judicial system. Other humanitarian agencies and human rights bodies also play important roles.
United Nations	UN agencies, funds and programs (AFPs), such as Unicef or UN Women, have a specific vulnerable group that they are mandated to protect and advocate for. AFPs are most active in the humanitarian, advocacy and development space. The UN Sectretariat, including peacekeeping, peacebuilding and mediation functions, can use its good offices through special envoys to achieve protection through dialogue, and peacekeepers to establish protection through both direct and indirect means.
Peacekeepers	While they remain only one avenue for pursuing PoC objectives, the peace operations deployed by the UN and other intergovernmental bodies (e.g. the AU, EU, NATO) have become an increasingly central pillar of PoC strategies. In particular, twenty years since its emergence as a core focus for the UNSC, PoC has developed into a central part of UN peace operations. Against a backdrop of contemporary security challenges, including large-scale human rights violations and targeting of civilians, the role of peacekeepers to protect has been strengthened.71 In 2019 95% of peacekeepers were mandated to protect civilians and PoC mandates are integrated into the majority of peacekeeping missions.[72]
Militaries	Military forces are important actors in the implementation and promotion of PoC. Given the primary responsibility for the implementation of PoC is on the state, national military forces can play important roles in protecting civilians from external as well as some internal threats such as insurgencies. Outside of active conflict zones, military actors facilitate a protective environment by providing peace monitoring, underwriting safe movement of other actors such as humanitarian agencies, and developing infrastructure such as roads.

Police	Police can play important roles in PoC, however this is sometimes unclear and neglected due to the focus on military responses. The lack of clear guidance on the division of roles and responsibilities between the police and the military has contributed to this confusion.[73] However, when given the necessary authorisation they can provide for law and order inside IDP camps or even perform executive functions of arrest and detention to address criminal violence. When deployed in support of host state police, international police can act as a deterrent to social unrest through joint patrols, conduct riot control activities, support investigations and undertake capacity-building efforts with their local counterparts.
Private Military and Security Companies (PMSC)	Private military and security companies (PMSC) have been employed across a wide variety of contexts, and their tasks have ranged from direct combat, area security, detention security and intelligence, to training and logistical support. [74] The activities of PMSC may contribute to, complement or inhibit PoC efforts through their direct actions as well as how their actions reflect on the credibility and legitimacy of international efforts more broadly. The increasing regularity of their use should be examined from a PoC policy perspective.
Red Cross Red Crescent Movement	The Red Cross Movement, including the International Committee for the Red Cross and the International Federation of the Red Cross, has an unique responsibility in protecting civilians. They are enshrined in international and domestic law as the guardians of International Humanitarian Law, and of the Red Cross Movement emblems (the red cross, cresent and diamond) which are legally protected and cannot be used by other organisations. This is so that they meaning of the symbols is not diluted, but instead remain distinct symbols for the protection of civilians. The Red Cross movement is not therefore considered an international NGO, and may also remain apart from the UN cluster system in some circumstances to maintain both their neutrality and the appearance of it.
Human rights organisations	Human rights organisations and defenders play important roles in PoC through their efforts to promote and protect human rights. This is manifest in their investigation function, as well as in the monitoring and reporting of human rights abuses they often conduct in conflict-affected settings. The reporting and documentation work performed by human rights organisations contributes to PoC by systematically informing the work of others. This can include immediate action by the UNSC and potentially other judicial entities as well as longer term policy-making processes. Importantly too, it can inform protection actors present on the ground of rights abuse trends, so that they can best plan protection activities and responses, and prevention in particular.

Humanitarian agencies	In conflict-affected contexts, a wide range of humanitarian agencies seek to save lives, uphold human dignity and alleviate suffering[75] in line with humanitarian principles. Humanitarian agencies seek to be independent from the activities of political and military actors and are guided by the humanitarian principles. Humanitarian NGOs that do not necessarily have an express protection mandate also play a key role in supporting and strengthening PoC through monitoring and reporting, establishing protective environments, and providing humanitarian assistance to improve the welfare of civilians affected by conflict.
Development agencies	Development agencies that are involved in protection efforts are generally involved in supporting the creation of a longer-term protective environment. From an international development perspective, PoC refers to supporting and strengthening larger structural requirements such as good governance and economic and social development.
Civil Society	The involvement of civil society actors in PoC is evolving. Protection activities may be conducted by civil society actors such as religious groups, community networks, educational institutions, and local non-government organisations to facilitate dialogue and negotiations. These groups are often better connected in a local setting and may prove to be reliable sources of information on the protection needs of a civilian population. Their role in disseminating information is critical in ensuring that local communities have the necessary information to protect themselves. Civil society actors also have the capacity to help facilitate long-term, durable peace by installing localised protection structures.
Private Sector	Although frequently omitted from PoC discussions, local and international businesses can also play an important role in protection activities. There are a wide range of incentives for the private sector to engage in civilian protection. Armed conflict typically does not discriminate, meaning that staff of either local or international businesses are equally endangered in a combat zone. Further, political and economic stability is important for the operations of most companies.[76] There is significant room for partnership between the private sector, civil society and military actors.

ENDNOTES

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