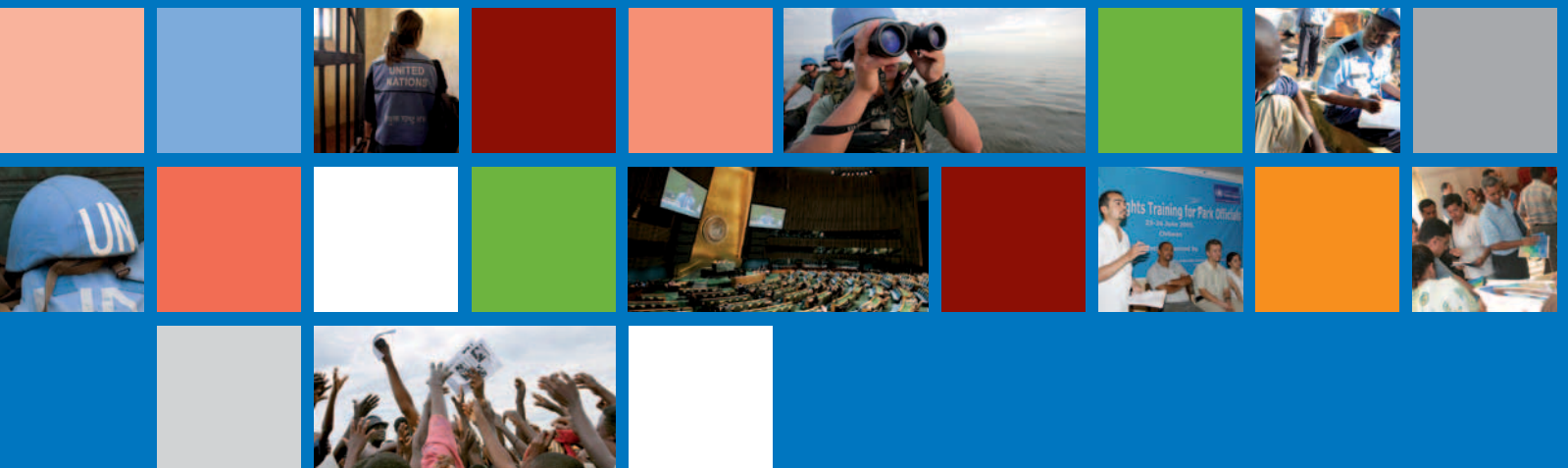


MANUAL ON human rights MONITORING

Chapter 30

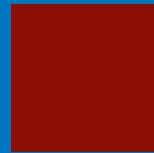
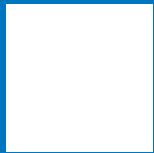
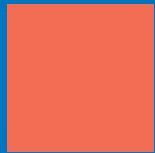
USING PRESENCE AND VISIBILITY

Chapter 30 Using presence and visibility



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

USING PRESENCE AND VISIBILITY



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A. Key concepts



- Visibility strategies by human rights field presences should be used strategically to increase human rights protection. However, their use should be assessed case by case to avoid situations where increased visibility and presence could be counterproductive.
- A field presence can increase its visibility through several means, including by:
 - (Re)acting decisively at key moments;
 - Establishing regional and local field presences;
 - Making use of field travel, delegations or visits to affected areas;
 - Accompanying highly threatened individuals;
 - Reaching out to groups that are discriminated against or exposed to human rights violations.
- Other national and international actors can also play a role through their visible presence, such as humanitarian actors, diplomatic representatives, high-profile human rights personalities, United Nations entities, other components of a United Nations peace operation or national human rights institutions (NHRIs).
- Field presences and human rights officers (HROs) must at all times take into account the security environment, risks of reprisals, and the analysis and recommendations of United Nations security personnel when undertaking human rights monitoring work.



B. Introduction


A human rights field presence may provide protection through its very presence and visual impact. For example, an OHCHR logo and the way it is used locally, the location of a country office, the visit by a special rapporteur to remote communities or urban slums, the presence of human rights officers wearing United Nations jackets during demonstrations or when visiting human rights defenders at risk are all forms of a visible presence that can provide protection. Therefore, HROs should be aware of the impact that their presence may have and they should use it strategically to improve protection.

This chapter focuses exclusively on the different forms of physical presence and visibility that may provide protection to rights holders and others, while acknowledging that in certain situations increased visibility and presence could be counterproductive. The chapter also deals with avoiding the harmful effects of visibility strategies and the security concerns arising from them.

How much visibility?

The use of visibility strategies must always be judged case by case, since enhanced visibility affects the discreetness of the field presence. Additionally, it has serious resource implications – on means of transport, offices, human resources, etc. – as well as security implications.

Different kinds of situations will call for different levels of visibility. Monitoring a large demonstration or an imminent forced eviction might require a substantial number of HROs, while making a subtle presence known at a trial will require few staff, but probably a longer-term commitment.

Visibility is also linked to strategic management decisions about security, human rights officers' work plans and travel schedules (logistics, vehicles, etc.) and should thus be considered explicitly in the planning process (see chapter on *Strategic planning for human rights impact* ).


Nonetheless, the more time HROs spend outside their offices visiting communities and building local contacts, the greater their protective impact. Sometimes the rapid deployment of an HRO has a timely impact on a crisis.

In large United Nations peace operations, the visibility of the human rights component may be hard to distinguish from that of other components, including the United Nations police, civil affairs, child protection, military, public information and others, as well as from the high-level visibility of the head of mission, with its positive and negative consequences. For instance, a human rights component that is located within a United Nations military compound should go out of its way to be visible and reach out to victims or sources of information that may otherwise be hesitant to approach HROs in such a setting.

However, **increased visibility may be counterproductive** where the field presence is widely perceived as a “foreign interferer” either nationally or locally.

A field presence's outreach has a dual audience and purpose: on the one hand, to remind the individuals, groups or institutions that carry out violations of their human rights obligations; and, on the other, to build the confidence of the local population, civil society and human rights defenders.

This dual nature can cause a dilemma at times: a field presence's strategic choice to emphasize meetings and contact with national authorities or other high-level actors may be at the expense of visits to civil society and community-based organizations or to rural villages. For example, if a field presence decides to establish its office in a part of town close to facilities and powerful institutions, it may become much less approachable or accessible by the poor. **Any visibility decisions need to strike a balance between both objectives.**

Whatever approach is chosen to raise the visibility of the field presence, it can be further magnified through the use of the media and high-profile statements (see chapters on *Advocacy and intervention with the authorities*; *Human rights reporting* and *Working with the media* ).

Visibility is a key component of many of the *monitoring strategies* discussed in other parts of this *Manual*. They include visits to places of detention, visits to communities threatened by forced eviction, visits to refugee camps, trial observation, monitoring in the context of elections, and presence during demonstrations and public meetings.

Field presences also normally organize *special events* at specific times of the year to promote awareness. For instance, each year they use the "16 days of activism against gender violence" (25 November to 10 December), Human Rights Day (10 December) and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December) as opportunities for organizing events that enhance their own visibility and raise awareness of specific human rights issues.

Similarly, their participation in the celebrations of national festivities in the host country also serves this purpose. Human rights field presences throughout the world have also organized concerts, conferences, film festivals, photo contests, art exhibitions and other events both locally and nationally with the same aim in mind.

C. Methods of visibility

A field presence can increase its visibility through several other methods, for instance by (a) (re)acting decisively at key moments; (b) establishing regional and local field presences; (c) making use of field travel, delegations or visits to affected areas; (d) escorting highly threatened individuals; and (e) reaching out to groups that are discriminated against or exposed to human rights violations.

1 (Re)acting decisively at key moments

If the local population or others seek urgent help or an intervention from a field presence to prevent or respond to a human rights violation or abuse, its willingness to respond and the swiftness of its response have important consequences not only for its protective impact but also for building local trust and credibility.

A field presence's willingness and readiness to respond quickly and objectively, by promptly going to the location and intervening to attempt to prevent a violation from occurring – for instance, when it is known that a planned demonstration or a forced eviction is threatened with police repression, or that an armed group is preparing an incursion that is likely to affect civilians – will be remembered for a long time.



Democratic Republic of the Congo

When conflict resumed in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the end of 2004, the human rights component of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) managed to rapidly deploy a special investigation team to the area. The team spent three months there, conducting proactive joint patrols with peacekeepers, investigating allegations of ethnically motivated killings and facilitating the safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs). This rapid deployment yielded excellent results: better protection and prevention of further human rights violations. It also comforted a distressed population by proving that egregious violations would not go unpunished, and provided the peace operation with reliable and timely information on allegations of ethnically motivated incidents that could have derailed the peace process.



Nepal

When tension rose again in Gaur (Rautahat District, Nepal), the head of OHCHR-Nepal travelled to the area where protests were being organized and called on all parties to take all necessary steps to avoid a repetition of the tragic events that led to the killing of 27 Maoist cadres in March 2007.

In some cases, visits to a site of recent human rights violations by the head of the field presence can generate visible, positive effects.

When appropriate, a field presence can also solicit a prompt inter-agency reaction to a situation, further raising the visibility and impact of the United Nations. For example, OHCHR and other United Nations agencies based in the Occupied Palestinian Territory regularly issue joint statements on situations of common concern in order to increase their visibility and strengthen their protective action.



Cambodia

OHCHR has been instrumental in developing an official United Nations country team (UNCT) position on urban evictions and resettlement, based on international human rights standards, allowing concrete advocacy interventions by the UNCT and by individual agencies present in Cambodia.

Trust in the field presence may be damaged or even compromised if its response is too slow or insufficient.



Côte d'Ivoire

When a ship illegally offloaded toxic waste in the sea around Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) in August 2006, the human rights component of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) was criticized for failing to respond promptly to the incident, which temporarily affected its relations with national stakeholders.

In settings of frequent crises and limited human resources, the demand for rapid response can become a dilemma for many human rights field presences – especially because the desire to build longer-term commitments or projects can legitimately constrain the resources available for crisis response.

When facing such situations, HROs should consider the following:

- A very focused and intense, short-term visible presence can have a particularly notable protective impact and also send a powerful signal of solidarity to victims;
- Since high-profile events create high expectations, HROs must take special care not to make promises they cannot keep; and
- HROs should not respond instinctively to a situation unless the field presence has a commitment to do so and capacity for follow-up.



Democratic Republic of the Congo

The MONUC human rights component had followed the judicial proceeding of a militiaman accused of killings until his conviction by a local court. When his case was taken up to the provincial Appeals Court, the component felt it was necessary to closely monitor the entire appeal process, since it feared an acquittal due to corrupt practices. It made it known that the international community would visibly follow the proceedings. It is believed that this reaction prevented corruption from affecting the outcome of the trial, leading to an important victory against impunity.



2 Having a regional and local field presence

In areas of tension, conflict, emergency or where the worst human rights violations occur, the deployment of HROs has greater influence on the protection of human rights. This is typically done by setting up strategic regional and sub-offices in a country, which will give HROs better access to the population and to all levels of authority, and more mobility to visit several affected locations quickly.

The presence of a regional or sub-office is generally perceived locally as a visible institutional commitment and is on the whole appreciated.

The installation of a regional or sub-office makes it logistically easier for the local population to access the field presence. The local population may perceive this as an acknowledgment of the value of its local identity and the significance of the challenges it faces. This recognition has an encouraging effect in itself. It can help to build confidence in the human rights field presence, which in turn is likely to increase cooperation with the community. This cooperation is essential for human rights monitoring and fact-finding to be effective.

A sub-office normally benefits from a more direct and regular contact with local authorities and greater access to a larger number of communities, which can enable prompt local responses.

A sub-office can reach out to the most remote or marginalized parts of society: **the more accessible HROs are to rights holders, the better. Experience has shown that the presence of sub-offices considerably bolsters protection at the local level.**

The presence of regional or sub-offices also helps to “regionalize” the analysis, thus reflecting more accurately local conditions and leading to strategies tailored to the local peculiarities. It enables the establishment of more systematic communication with the authorities.

Even with limited resources, a field presence can develop a number of sub-office strategies, by:

- Compensating for its limited size and resources by **establishing part-time “point of contact offices”** in communities where the field presence is not permanently stationed, and make regular visits to these offices;
- **Coordinating its efforts** with those that have a larger or more visible presence in the country (such as national human rights institutions, journalists, bar associations, humanitarian agencies or NGOs), especially when its human resources are more limited;
- **Working with local actors**; this contributes to empowering them and ensures sustainability, since they will continue their work even after the field presence has left.



Haiti

In 2007, the human rights component of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) started to deploy HROs once a week to temporary offices in Port-au-Prince’s urban slums of Martissant and Cité Soleil to ensure a local presence and be closer to the most affected victims of urban violence.

In some countries, the deployment of multiple field offices can be a daunting challenge due to the sheer size of the country, difficult travel conditions and poor transport infrastructure. It may also have significant consequences for resources and security. However, if the field presence's strategic and security analysis indicates that the deployment of more sub-offices in rural or remote areas would add to its capacity to protect human rights, it would need to make every effort to secure the necessary resources.



Democratic Republic of the Congo

In early 2005, the MONUC human rights component established four human rights mobile teams in north and south Kivu, Katanga and Ituri, to strengthen its presence and monitoring capacity in areas which would otherwise be difficult to access due to insecurity and logistical constraints. These teams received special equipment and military escorts to regularly spend sufficient time in remote areas and conduct in-depth investigations into allegations of human rights violations.

3 Making use of field travel, delegations and other visits to affected areas

Most often HROs are most visible in the communities or cities where their offices are located. They may become visible in other locations by conducting field visits, either independently or with others.

A visit by an HRO to an isolated area or to meet a particular group – such as persons with disabilities, IDPs, victims of gender-based violence, migrants or national minorities – will automatically send a message to local authorities, groups or institutions. It may also open opportunities and encourage local action. It may also sometimes encourage visits by Government officials to places which they had previously ignored or considered off-limits.

Field visits sometimes provide the only access that local people have to the international human rights community. For many, travelling to the capital or even to a regional office to report a human rights violation is often very difficult for logistical, financial or security reasons.

Proper follow-up to such field visits is essential. Unfortunately, especially in remote areas or in armed conflict, sporadic visits may actually increase local vulnerabilities and fears. A field presence or HRO that decides to take action on a delicate situation should be ready to keep in touch, in order to reduce frustrations and risks of reprisals resulting from the visit.

Local actors are often willing to bear some level of risk if they believe their interaction with an international institution has a chance of improving the situation. Without making unrealistic promises, HROs should demonstrate that the field presence will do its best to address the problem.

A field presence can adopt a variety of strategies for field visits. It may have a regular rotation of monthly visits to a series of communities, thus creating a certain transparent expectation of a steady monitoring presence. Alternatively, as long as appropriate security concerns are taken into account, it may adopt a more unpredictable or intermittent tactic, to ensure that local contacts are not being influenced by others in expectation of the visit.

If human rights violations are widespread, a field presence will never have the resources to visit every single affected community. It must therefore **prioritize the visits that are likely to have the greatest potential to protect the largest number of people or to have the strongest impact, and those that will most effectively promote the field presence's national protection strategy.**

Field presences must also pay special attention to the **risk of retaliation against local actors and persons** associated with high-level or sensitive visits and stand ready to take additional measures to protect them.



Sudan

After a visit by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan to an IDP camp in south Darfur (Sudan) in 2006, some local actors who were associated with the visit were threatened. Based on this experience, when the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Darfur in 2007, she sought assurances from the local authorities about the safety of people she met during her visit. After the conclusion of the visit, HROs conducted a follow-up visit to the communities to check if any of their members faced reprisals from the authorities for having met the High Commissioner.

4 Escorting highly threatened individuals

Providing a protective escort to particularly threatened human rights defenders, organizations, communities or other individuals is a highly targeted and labour-intensive method of protecting them. It is normally based on available resources, capacities and agreement at the highest management level. It literally involves walking or travelling with a person at risk, living in threatened communities, or being based at the same location of a threatened activity or organization's office. The impact is, in principle, the same as other protective presences, but much more focused on specific groups or individuals.

Such escorting is normally not undertaken by human rights field presences themselves, but rather by other specialized institutions or organizations with the necessary expertise and capacities.¹

Field presences can therefore identify agencies in the country that could assist them in accompanying highly threatened individuals and refer such individuals to them.



Nepal

On a number of occasions, the OHCHR-Nepal office has coordinated with the NGO Peace Brigades International to ensure that certain highly threatened human rights defenders are accompanied to increase their protection.

¹ For instance, the NGO Peace Brigades International. For more information, see www.peacebrigades.org.

Although in certain circumstances experienced HROs may accompany or escort threatened individuals to attend trials or closely follow up cases of individuals at risk in detentions facilities, they should **avoid creating unrealistic expectations that the field presence can meet everyone's needs.**

Because closely or regularly escorting specific groups or individuals is very labour-intensive, it is usually reserved for very high-risk cases or people whose survival is perceived as critical to broader strategies, such as high-profile civil society leaders, exemplary community leaders or key witnesses in sensitive judicial proceedings. Additionally, **it requires at all times a careful analysis of the security risks of each case, and the motivations of the potential assailants.**



Guatemala

In the aftermath of the 1981–82 repression by the Armed Forces in Guatemala, the indigenous communities that had taken refuge in the north launched a campaign in the early 1990s to obtain support for and publicly denounce the continued attacks on their communities by the army. Many national and international observers, including the United Nations Independent Expert for Guatemala, visited them and stated that they were unarmed civilians living in great poverty. From this moment on, embassies and international organizations stepped up their escorting, reducing the attacks on these indigenous communities and contributing to their return to their lands and farms.

Accompanying threatened groups can be both politically and physically risky, but it has demonstrably saved lives and sustained organizations and communities.

However, it should be used sparsely and strategically, especially given the resources and effort required to accompany even a small number of organizations or communities and the fact that it is impossible to meet all needs.

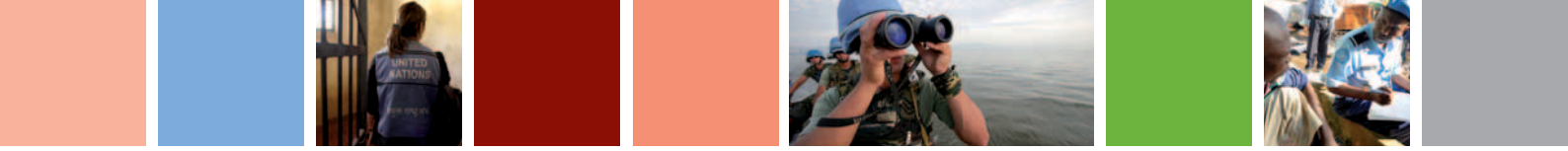
5 Reaching out to groups that are discriminated against or exposed to human rights violations

Human rights field presences should seek ways to reach out to and be seen with groups subjected to exclusion, discrimination or in a vulnerable situation and that may not necessarily be organized.

For instance, the direct engagement of a field presence with women defenders, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, minorities, persons living with HIV/AIDS, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender movements, slum-dwellers or landless peasants can significantly contribute to their protection, recognition and empowerment.

HROs can use their presence in specific settings to send a strong signal of solidarity to individuals and groups in a vulnerable situation and show interest in their situation, for instance by:

- Undertaking monitoring visits to groups or communities;
- Visibly observing demonstrations by social movements claiming their rights;
- Attending meetings and conferences on these issues;



- Encouraging the High Commissioner for Human Rights or United Nations special procedures mandate holders to issue statements of support on specific occasions;
- Inviting stigmatized or marginalized organizations to meetings attended by actors that tend to exclude them in order to promote their inclusion; or
- Visibly associating with or accompanying prominent leaders of movements or organizations associated with them.



Uganda

OHCHR-Uganda and Mental Health Association, a local organization of persons with disabilities, visited persons with intellectual and mental disabilities in 13 different communities in the district of Soroti (Teso) in Uganda. During these visits, the OHCHR field presence assessed and discussed with community members their level of enjoyment of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

D. Coordinating presence and visibility strategies with United Nations and other actors

The field presence is not alone in being able to use its visibility to strengthen the protection of human rights. Other United Nations entities and international actors – including international humanitarian agencies, NGOs, high-level visitors and diplomats – can be present in the affected areas and make their concerns known, too.

A field presence can advise them and encourage them to prioritize visits and reach out to specific regions, communities or groups; prevent duplication of work; and maximize the impact of their presence, capacities and resources.



Occupied Palestinian Territory

The OHCHR field presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory participates every year in a joint initiative of many international organizations to have a visible presence in certain areas of the West Bank during the crucial olive harvest and attract attention to the fact that denying the local population access to its olive plantations has major economic implications.

1 High-profile human rights personalities

A field presence can play a role in influencing the travel itineraries of high-profile human rights personalities, such as the United Nations special procedures mandate holders, special representatives of the Secretary-General or the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In fact, country visits by such personalities are a valuable opportunity to undertake field visits to locations, communities and actors outside the capital and increase, for instance, recognition and protection for many human rights defenders. **The field presence should therefore encourage, invite, advise and guide all such international visitors whose visibility would further enhance human rights protection in the country concerned.**

2 Diplomatic representatives

Field trips by foreign diplomats can also have a protective impact. A field presence's senior management should maintain close links with the diplomatic corps and find out who is the most responsive to the human rights needs of persons in vulnerable situations. **HROs should avoid any bias in their contacts with embassies**, for example by liaising with representatives from all regions.

Field presences can encourage diplomats to visit areas where their presence could have a protective impact and refer to existing human rights guidelines addressed specifically to them. For instance, the

European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders² suggest that diplomats and representatives of European Union institutions should provide “as and where appropriate, visible recognition to human rights defenders, through the use of appropriate publicity, visits or invitations”.



Guatemala

In response to the increasing number and intensity of attacks against human rights defenders, the OHCHR-Guatemala office organized a full-day event in June 2007 to pay tribute to defenders and their work. The event was attended by human rights NGOs, the public prosecutor, the Minister of the Interior, the national human rights institution and many representatives of the international community and donor agencies, including 27 ambassadors. Data indicated a clear decrease in the attacks against defenders after the event and showed how, in the following months, the visible and numerous participation of the international and diplomatic community helped to improve the situation of human rights defenders.

In some cases, field presences have visited crisis areas together with embassy personnel in order to multiply the visibility effect. By visiting areas where there are serious human rights concerns, diplomats get a chance to assess the situation first-hand, report more accurately to their capitals, focus media attention on the human rights situation and exert pressure on the Governments concerned to improve it.



Colombia

The OHCHR field presence in Colombia has repeatedly visited rural areas and communities throughout the country together with representatives of foreign embassies. Such visits are an opportunity for the diplomats not only to see with their own eyes the reality outside the capital and gain a different perspective on the human rights situation, but also to engage with interlocutors who are not their “usual” counterparts and show a sign of support to human rights defenders vis-à-vis the armed groups in the various regions.

3 Components of a United Nations peace operation

In the context of a United Nations peace operation, human rights components can provide the rest of the peace operation with analysis and recommendations, based on international human rights norms and standards, on where their presence would have the most positive impact on the population’s enjoyment of the full range of human rights.

HROs in United Nations peace operations should also consider the human rights protection impact of joint visits and travels with other components of the mission, including the military, the United Nations police, justice, child protection, civil affairs and others whose presence would symbolize and project United Nations concern about human rights violations and therefore act as a deterrent.

² www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/GuidelinesDefenders.pdf (accessed 16 May 2011).

Nonetheless, HROs should also analyse and take into account the disadvantage of travelling with military or police escorts and the potential negative image portrayed to local actors, which may discourage them from sharing information or lead to an immediate association of HROs with armed peacekeepers.

4 Humanitarian actors

Within the humanitarian coordination structure, human rights field presences participate actively in the cluster approach³ and are fully integrated in the humanitarian reform activities.

Within this framework, humanitarian activities can often serve as a powerful justification for requiring regular access to populations at risk that might otherwise be isolated, because of natural disasters, epidemics, conflict, etc.

The assessment of humanitarian needs is a key opportunity for bringing international visibility to isolated areas. For instance, joint assessments which look at both human rights and humanitarian assistance needs project the dual message that the international community will help and is watching. Moreover, the provision of assistance by other agencies can open doors for other international presences.

HROs should regularly liaise with humanitarian partners and inform them of where their presence could have the greatest protective impact, but also inject a human rights-based approach into humanitarian activities and programmes, and ensure that human rights considerations are included in protection and early recovery processes.

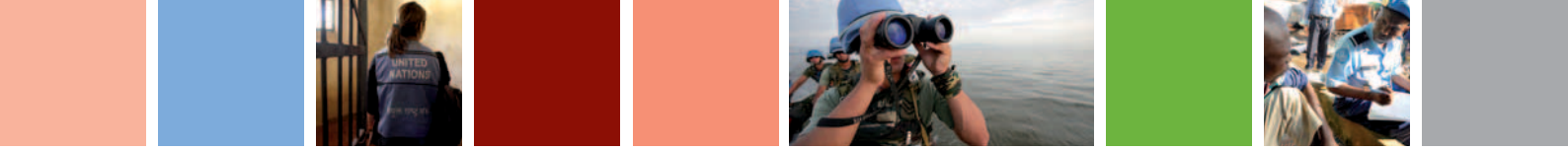
In certain highly sensitive contexts, humanitarian access may be the only one possible. By participating in joint humanitarian missions, HROs may ensure a minimum of human rights and protection work.

This link to human rights concerns may be resisted by humanitarian partners who fear that a human rights focus may jeopardize their access to a region. For instance, in the past OHCHR-Colombia decided not to travel alongside the World Food Programme to certain regions, because it was felt that the human rights element of the mission could result in blocking the food delivery. In such cases, human rights field presences should ensure continued and productive communication with their humanitarian partners, while taking into account their concerns. Each situation must be assessed individually, with the interest of victims in mind.

5 National human rights institutions

Visibility strategies can also be coordinated with national actors, including national human rights institutions. In Burundi for example, monitoring visits by HROs along with Burundian judicial and police authorities have led to the redress, on the spot, of many irregularities in detention procedures and given greater visibility to the impact of the human rights component's field work.

³ Human rights field presences' main support to the cluster approach is in the protection cluster, where OHCHR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have agreed in principle to lead in disaster response, as necessary and when resources allow. Additional information on the cluster approach is available from www.humanitarianinfo.org and www.humanitarianreform.org/.




Afghanistan

The human rights component of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) worked closely with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, with both sharing advice on where to intervene visibly and effectively. On one occasion, the human rights component, the Commission and the Department of Labour and Social Affairs undertook a joint visit and assessment of an orphanage in Ghor, which increased the visibility of the institution and its needs.

E. Avoiding harmful impact of visibility

An influential actor or institution may attempt to undermine the field presence and its work through reprisals against its more vulnerable local contacts. Experienced HROs should carefully assess such risks when planning any visits or other monitoring activities in sensitive areas.

Despite concerns about reprisals, research suggests that most civil society actors believe that visits by the field presence to sensitive areas are necessary and helpful, and yield a net protective result.

Field presences must, therefore, find ways to **minimize the risk of reprisal without curtailing protective action**. For example during public visits, while certain HROs may hold official meetings with authorities, others may seek more discreet means of getting in contact with other groups, such as through more private meetings. Also, HROs must always avoid naming local sources and revealing the identities of victims or perpetrators in public reports (see chapters on *Protection of victims, witnesses and other cooperating persons* and *Human rights reporting* ).

A field presence's commitment to follow up on the human rights situation and future visits may often – though not always – constitute a sufficient degree of protection against potential retaliation.

A field presence needs to be aware of local organizations', victims', witnesses' and human rights defenders' concerns about security and discretion, and advise them on precautions they can take to reduce their own risks. **If the field presence has reasons to believe that because of its interactions with local actors, they may suffer some sort of retaliation, then it should seriously consider not interacting with them, or finding alternative means to establish a contact or gather information.**


Since most human rights field presences are not in a position to provide physical or other types of protection, HROs must seriously consider the security implications of any of their acts not only for themselves, but also for their colleagues, victims, witnesses, their families, sources, authorities and all other persons they interact with in the exercise of their functions. Human rights field presences and local organizations should be analysing these dynamics together in order to minimize the risks and discourage risk-taking.

Visibility may also have a negative impact if local actors attempt to manipulate the field presence.



Example

In one country, OHCHR was invited to observe court martial proceedings, but it decided not to attend since it considered that the visible presence of a United Nations entity would have somehow legitimized an otherwise unacceptably flawed legal process.



A negative perception or image of the field presence may nullify all efforts to protect through visibility. In some cases, there are negative perceptions of the United Nations – as a peace operation or a UNCT – or the international community more broadly, to which the image of the field presence is linked or associated in the eyes of the public.

Field presences and HROs must at all times take into account the security environment and the analysis and recommendations of United Nations security personnel. With their assistance, heads of field presences and other senior HROs need to develop a detailed security analysis, which considers the changing dynamics in each part of the country. Visibility strategies also need to be in accordance with the country's minimum operations security standards (MOSS).



Guatemala and Sudan

For some time, the human rights field presences in Guatemala and Darfur (Sudan) decided to remove their logos from official United Nations vehicles when this identification appeared to lead to attacks against staff.

Moreover, security factors may vary greatly for different groups within a society. For example, visible communication between male HROs and local women might lead to retaliation against the latter in certain cultures.

Security precautions and preparations cannot eliminate risks entirely. A field presence will often make the greatest difference when it gets out of the safe neighbourhoods of the main cities, and is present where the problems are, interacting with victims, witnesses and those responsible for human rights violations. When HROs reach out to those in the greatest danger – be it for a demonstration likely to turn violent, a riot in a prison, increased attacks against social leaders, or an armed conflict – their own vulnerability naturally increases, but so does their protective impact on others.

Therefore, **visibility strategies – in accordance with United Nations security procedures and United Nations risk management principles – should promote “smart risk-taking”, based on a careful analysis of all security implications and adopting measures to mitigate risks.**

In practical terms, this means:

- Do not take any unnecessary risks;
- Accept (limited) risk only if the benefits outweigh the costs;
- Risk management decisions are taken at the appropriate level of delegated authority.

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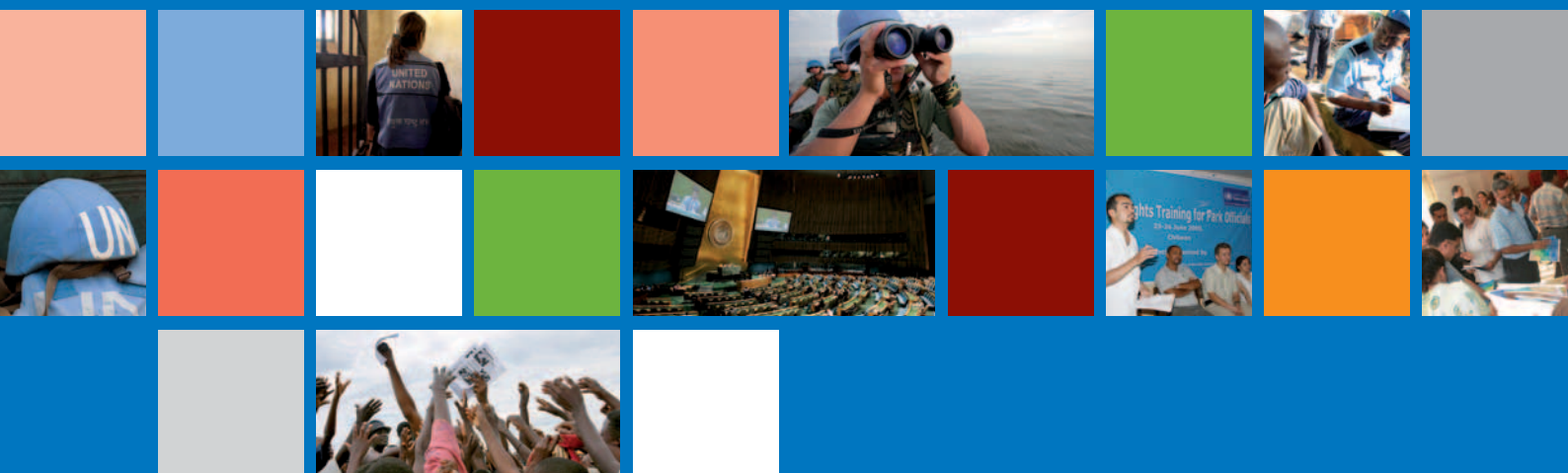
MANUAL ON human rights MONITORING

This chapter forms part of the revised *Manual on Human Rights Monitoring*. Following the success of its first edition, published in 2001, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has updated and restructured the *Manual*, to provide the latest and most relevant good practices for the conduct of monitoring work by human rights officers, under the approach developed and implemented by the Office.

The revised *Manual* provides practical guidance for those involved in the specialized work of human rights monitoring, particularly in United Nations field operations. This publication comprehensively addresses all phases of the human rights monitoring cycle, setting out professional standards for the effective performance of the monitoring function. It also outlines strategies to maximize the contribution of monitoring to the protection of human rights.

While each chapter has been made available separately, linkages with other chapters are highlighted throughout. A full reading of the *Manual* is thus recommended for a comprehensive understanding of human rights monitoring.

This tool has been tailored to the everyday needs of United Nations human rights officers in the field. The methodology it sets out would, nonetheless, be of equal relevance to others tasked with human rights monitoring functions. Its wider use and application by regional organizations, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations, relevant governmental bodies and others is strongly encouraged.



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