How Civilians Survive Violence:
A Preliminary Inventory

Casey A. Barrs
Center for Civilians in Harm's Way
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Note to the Reader

There will always be mass violence. There will always be horrific times when we "outsiders" cannot shield civilians despite our avowed responsibility to protect them. Millions died amid internal conflicts in the last 15 years, and there is absolutely no guarantee that the next 15 years will be any better. That is the starting point of this paper: *our* capacity to protect is very much in doubt. Even when we do "save" civilians it is very often only because they saved themselves first—surviving violence by their wits and wiles for months or years, and then running a deadly gauntlet to reach our camps or safe havens.

Many observers note the critical importance of civilian self-protection, but it appears there have been very few systematic attempts to inventory their tactics and strategies. By and large we appreciate civilians' capacity for self-preservation or "resilience" but scarcely act upon it. This *preliminary* inventory cites protections that civilians the world over have learned time and again as they survive and serve others alone amid violence. Some types of actions cited here have alone saved millions of lives.

This document has three sections: local safety, local sustenance, and local services. Life-critical *sustenance* and *services* are an inseparable part of this because civilians often see them as central to their security, often take physical risks to obtain them, and often die in far greater numbers from the collapse of such elemental things than from direct physical violence. The biggest killers amid conflict are not guns or blades but malnutrition and disease—which at times can be anticipated and prepared for.

Each section begins with conventional local efforts to *engage* dangerous actors and *influence* events. These good efforts have limits "🚫". (In 2009, the ICRC interviewed four thousand people in eight war-torn countries. When asked what civilians living in areas of armed conflict need the most, only 3% chose "to influence decisions that affect them."[1]) Each section then progresses toward the less conventional actions civilians attempt. These are efforts to survive the actors and events that they cannot influence. These too have limits—but tend to be deliberate, balanced, sequenced calculations by the people themselves.

Many of these actions have at times received ad-hoc backing by outside agencies, and many others could be supported by outsiders under certain circumstances. (This is the topic of another Cuny Center paper, *Preparedness Support*, depicting how qualified aid agencies can in some situations help brace local staff, partners, and beneficiaries for violence while working under the gun.) ***This document does not urge the support of any particular action; as an inventory it only illustrates what civilians at times do.*** Self-protection is not a panacea, nor is it easy to support. Yet of all protections, those for physical safety as well as life-critical sustenance and services depicted here will be the last ones standing because they rely on the abilities of the very people who are left standing alone as violence shuts the world out.

This inventory is not comprehensive—and the reader is invited to contribute to it. The taxonomy used here is just one of many plausible ways to organize the discussion. Much here could be debated and rearranged, but the big picture is this: *we often lack the capacity to protect, they often learn this capacity on their own, and we can at times help them with this lethal learning curve.*

How Civilians Survive Violence

PHYSICAL SAFETY

	Accommodation[†]	

Formal engagement

Influence violent powers and events through organized focus on

o Good governance, rule of law, human rights, autonomy, etc.
o Conflict mediation, negotiation, reconciliation, prevention, etc.
o Complaint (public or discreet), lobbying, advocacy, media, etc.
o Confront with protest and nonviolent action
    o Open opposition as long as possible
    o When open opposition too dangerous and formal accommodation
       not deemed possible then:
          Disengage
          Transition underground: political struggle
          Transition underground: political and armed struggle
          Transition back: very common to continue probing for
            reengagement and a formal end to violence

> Formal engagement can involve civil society activism, appeal to duty-bearers, forms of dialogue and expression, etc.
> Locally based early warning at times trigger such engagement.

> Engaging may ultimately prove ineffective or too dangerous.

> Disengaging, going underground (whether armed or not) can be a fundamental act of protection, but carries obvious risks.

Traditional engagement

Customary processes of justice and peace for public safety
o Custom law
o Traditional and/or non-state authorities and arbiters of law
o Traditional processes for redress, restitution, intergroup mediation, etc.
   This spills over into many social norms (like public shunning as sanction or deterrent), religious rites (for reconciliation that ends blood feuds or for forgiveness that brings those with blood on their hands back into the community fold), long-held conventions (like those governing resource disputes, restoring honor), etc.
o [For traditional or non-formal ***policing*** see section on "Skills and tactics by which communities avoid violence"]

> Customary processes for protecting the public's safety—sometimes working in tandem with formal processes, other times not—are often seen by civilians as more relevant and reliable than those formal state processes.

> Customary processes for peace and justice may fail to meet jurisprudence or human rights standards and may be susceptible to corruption, discrimination, etc. Yet sharing the same indigenous culture, formal processes face the similar risks and may prove no more or less open to reform.

[†] As used here, "accommodation" means accepting certain realities and is not intended to carry a negative connotation such as when one appeases or willingly assists belligerents. Civilians often tactically acquiesce in the face of armed groups, perhaps cutting informal deals. Such appeasement (or at least the appearance of it) is seen here in the pragmatic rather than the partisan sense.

Non-formal engagement

Persuade threatening powers that populace is compliant
o Comply with demands for intelligence, manpower and material, etc**.**
   o Bend to the breaking point accommodate
   o Do not overtly organize, speak out or act out
o If compliance becomes too harmful to oneself or endangers others,
  locals often fake or exaggerate their cooperation:
   o Delay, deceit, misreporting, underperforming, selective obedience
   o Make exaggerated show of self-policing
o Find ways to flatter power's vanity; tout "party line"

Persuade threatening powers that one is helpful or harmless
o Offer intelligence of limited use (facts a bit obvious, outdated, etc.)
o Find ways to make yourself valuable or indispensable to your abusers
o Make flattering remarks in written or electronic communication that is
  apt to be intercepted or when apt to be eavesdropped by informants
o Feign passivity or stupidity

Persuade threatening powers that one is simply human
o Find ways to offset the messages of dehumanization that often facilitate
  atrocities
   o Use cultural, literary, societal, or faith-based references to belie
    propaganda about an ethnic or gender group
   o Use face-to-face encounters to belie propaganda about an ethnic or
    gender group
   o Use (grand)mothers to exert positive (filial) or negative (shame)
    messages
   o Use children to convey images/messages of humanity
   o Use former fighters who eschew the propaganda as interlocutors

Present threatening powers with a false identity
o Fake identity documents; alter accent, attire, mannerisms, etc.

Persuade followers to remain nonaligned and peaceful
o Leaders engage those in populace most at risk of being cowed, incited,
  attracted, or feeling no choice but to "take sides in a conflict"
   o Counter belligerent fear or hate propaganda, slanderous myths, etc.
   o Dampen ardor of young males about real nature of war and warriors;
    (fact-checking mechanisms, testimonials from demobilized fighters,
    messaging by moral authorities, etc.)
   o Provide young males outlets (both real and symbolic) for a sense of
    duty, manhood, respect, honor that might be luring them to violence
   o Address *safety* and life-critical *sustenance* and *services* so as to
    reduce the push/pull forces that lead to desperate enlistment,
    premature flight, or preemptive attacks on others
o For those who have already been recruited, create a persuasive counter
  narrative to encourage their defection
o Declare peace community, disallow personal weapons, etc.
o Engage in genuine self-policing (investigate and sanction those who
  engage in violence or collaboration)

Millions survive by managing unequal power relations in non-formal ways, probing for tradeoffs and for exemptions to violence and oppression.

There are degrees of compliance. Civilians try to keep concessions survivable while preserving some autonomy and dignity.

Family and village-level efforts to engage power-holders tend to be non-formal and localized, far below more official domains in which governments and civil society "engage" each other. They may have little to do with civic processes between citizens and duty-bearers redressing grievances within the rule of law. Instead, *they occur between unequal parties, with the weaker calculating which concessions are the least harmful*.

Feigned (partial) submission is often seen as a way of being at once compliant *and* defiant.

At the breaking point, locals often disengage from and avoid abusive powers.

Outsiders promoting civil society or nonviolent action might urge locals to "speak truth to power", not fully recognizing the dangers of continued engagement.

Self-policing requires constant communication with populace to reinforce a "community identity" against violence.

Psychological and material forces stoking conscription can at times be reduced. This is conflict management where people live, work and sleep.

Nonalignment or nonviolence may prove unrealistic or even dangerous.

o Create mechanisms for fast verification and handling of volatile rumors	
Cut deals with threatening powers, most often for o Recognition of neutrality / inviolability of a designated site or sanctuary (a peace community or zone, hospital, church, etc.) o Separation of combatants from civilians o Reprieve from conscription o Time-limited reprieve to get inoculations, evacuate specified vulnerable groups, etc. o Waiver of "taxes" o Freedom of movement ------------ *Note: Civilians might assure this deal-making with a payment*	Dominant powers and social blocs are not monolithic. Persecuted civilians often find useful ties to well-placed moderates, sympathizers (or pragmatic opportunists). This creates opportunities to eke out "humanitarian space". Such engagement poses risks. At times, a "good deal" is not being killed in return for cash, food, conscripts and intelligence. This lends more fuel to the conflict.

Avoidance

Mobilization and preparation

Mobilization (requires a mindset) o Trusted influentials who know what motivates a populace's attitudes and behaviors turn peoples' thinking toward more vigilance and planning o Affinity groups (cited later) and formal civil society or local political jurisdictions form the scaffolding around which to mobilize and prepare o Past experience surviving danger provides tangible tactics and hope for surviving present day threats o "Go & see" visits to, or "come & tell" survivor testimonials from, adjacent areas of conflict provide proof or persuasion of certain protection risks or opportunities o "Bamboo telegraphs" (local systems of gathering news the world over) provide convincement of the need (or not) to mobilize	Millions save their lives by physically avoiding violence. Their tactics and strategies become safer and more effective with increased experience. It is *abnormal* for people to plan their own displacement, especially if habit, instinct and simple cues fail to detect that violence has reached a dangerous new threshold. For this reason, mental readiness is as vital as tactical preparedness. Credible leaders and facts can alter a mindset of complacency or denial and clear the way for serious planning. Chance favors the prepared mind.

Preparation (requires a skill set)
o Certain crisis skill sets are continually reinvented across cultures and epochs. Here is an incomplete and imperfect listing**:**
  o Information
  o Communication
  o Safe sites
  o Safe movement
  o Threat response
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   *Note: These skill sets comprise hundreds of **optional** tactics. They also are the building blocks of strategies like non-formal policing, warning and flight. Though not the focus of this document, such skill sets also undergird civilian efforts in analogous situations, whether that of civil society brutally forced underground, or communities learning skills and making plans in advance of natural disaster. Such efforts reveal civilian inclinations and mastery in the face of deadly threats.*
	Whether civilians respond to danger by staying or going; whether they react at a community, household or individual level; whether in response to machetes or monsoons, raids or rains—preparation always matters and certain strategies and tactics consistently seem to apply. Preparedness is largely about shortening the deadly learning curve.
	
	Many of the <u>optional</u> tactics listed below entail risk. On a case-by-case basis, people must determine the greater risk: getting systematically prepared for violence—or not?

Skills and tactics by which communities avoid violence

Information *(or "humanitarian intelligence")*

Information gathering

o Radio: public service broadcasts

    o Incident bulletins warning of areas to avoid; moderates urging calm, dispelling rumors, etc.; lost persons tracing hour; skits on situational awareness; commentary on the purpose of aid or peacekeeping missions; features on preparing ORS treatment, food security tips, contents of a flight kit; etc.

o Other mass media (print, cassettes, video) from leaders conveying calm or solidarity or instructions, etc., if advisable

o Discreet word-of-mouth networks

    o Classic grapevine or "bamboo telegraph"

    o Paid informants

    o Family member in armed group learns about its intentions and strategies, impending operations, death lists, etc.

    o Travelers' networks, especially merchants

o Discreet observation

    o Monitor belligerents' preparations, movements, placement of landmines, etc.)

o "Go & see" visits; "come & tell" survivor testimonials.

o Tapping groups with extraterritorial scope and mobility (national NGOs, INGOs, missionaries, etc.).

o Commercially available radio scanners

o Public domain satellite imagery (like Google Earth) confirm damage to infrastructure, aid route planning, etc.

o Short and long-range patrolling or scouting.

o Track or spoor recognition

Information assessment

o Awareness of *priority* threat indicators

    o Shifts in military behavior—changes in command, strength, and morale; alterations in patrol; movement of fresh equipment and supply; unusual intelligence activity; increases in garrison size, upgrading of roads or extension of outposts; laying more mines, etc.

    o Shifts in political behavior—many indicators, but most often: rise of powers with dangerous backgrounds, passage of restrictive laws, vilification of supposed "enemies", clamp down on media and civil society, etc.

o Cross-verify reports from varied sources

    o Access first-hand accounts deemed reliable from conflict areas

    o Access sources of news deemed reliable for interpretation of events

Information protection

o Compartmentalization and need-to-know protocols

o Simple codes and other ways to reduce eavesdropping

o Social media devices with capacity for encryption

o Cover stories

o Avoid infiltration

    o Protocols to evaluate or interdict transients or newcomers

    o Passwords to determine "friend or foe" when encountering others

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Nothing is more essential to civilians amid violence than timely and accurate information. With it they may be forewarned of violence. They get life-saving advice, whether to quickly act or stay calmly in place. They learn of economic opportunity (labor, barter, lending, remittance). Information brought to those who are "cut off" brings comfort. It gets word of their suffering to the outside world. It enables the coordination required for what is often the safest asymmetrical response to violence: dispersed networks.

Public service broadcasts can have limits and risks. Stations can be shut down; staff harmed. Seemingly benign messages on political/military situations can have unintended consequences. Word of a distribution can lead predators to their prey. Content needs to be carefully considered, and plans for mobile or remote broadcasting perhaps prepared.

Civilians need quick verification of micro-level events more than analysis of macro-level trends based on math and computer models. They need ongoing real-time facts about threats and must push that awareness from the edge of their residences as far out as possible.

Outsiders can save lives by listening to civilians, then by sharing advice and experience (often based on lessons learned by *other civilians* in other conflicts.)

Outsiders may help bolster local information strategies and structures—and if deemed risky, STOP THERE, leaving locals to draw their own conclusions and take their own actions.

- o If informants spy due to intimidation or desperate need, then consider if the threats they face can be lowered
- o Populations segmented into close-knit groups are well-suited to detect attempted infiltration

Disinformation
- o Deterrent rumors of powerful patronage, rampant STDs, etc.
- o Alternating time and/or place of market, school, and worship activities
- o Fake documents, misleading communiqués, bogus landmine markers, false trail signs, cookfires simulate encampments (draw attention away), and other ruses to keep civilians out of harm's way
- o False impression that properties are abandoned, pillaged or uninhabitable

Counter information
- o Offset recruitment/radicalization efforts of dangerous groups with counter narrative to either prevent enlistment or encourage defection

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Communication
- o Paths of communication
  - o <u>Lines</u>: kinship lines are most confidential communication nets
  - o <u>Circles</u>: concentric circles of trusted contacts
  - o <u>Cells</u>: nonhierarchical network with strict compartments
  - o <u>Relays</u>: cross-factional cooperation; requires discreet "hand-off"
  - o <u>Wired in</u>: outside watchdog groups wire warning in; need nexus with local communication networks
  - o <u>Wired out</u>: alarm wired out to trigger prevention or intervention [†]
- o Compartmentalization and need-to-know protocols
- o Various forms of radio
  - o Basic operation of radio
  - o Ways to avoid eavesdropping and jamming
- o Operation of other telecom platforms, if feasible
  - o Internet, sat phone, mobile phone, Flickr, Twitter, Ushahidi, etc
- o Off-the-grid mobile power sources (hand crank, foot pedal, truck battery pods, electricity kiosks, etc.) for telecom
- o Low-tech signaling (line-of-sight or range-of-hearing in relays: mirror, shuttered light, semaphore, fires, whistles, foghorn, burning tires, etc.)
- o Courier systems
- o Broken communication: families agree upon a specific newspaper and day of the month in which they can discreetly post their location if they have become hopelessly separated

> Chain of reporting that interlaces a safety net with a social web is particularly strong.

> Any ICT platform intended to aid local warning (are many now emerging) must be plugged into a willing and organized local response. If it is not, it may be as unhelpful as a blind airdrop onto an unprepared drop zone.

> † Alarm wired out may include coordination with external responders (police, army, peacekeepers) that synchronizes first response by locals with follow-on response by outsiders.

Safe sites
- o Optimal locations; sites often chosen on basis of
  - o Secure ingress and secondary egress
  - o Reasonable access to life-critical sustenance
- o Optimal site formations
  - o <u>Consolidated</u>: when deterrence and communal action are priority
  - o <u>Dispersed</u>: when low-profile evasion is priority
  - o <u>Networked</u>: when low-profile and occasional communal action are priority
- o Observation or listening posts (along likely ground or air approaches)
- o Perimeter alert (manned but perhaps enhanced with tripwire alarms);

concentric rings and relays
- o Simple system of spotters and runners
- o Dogs for home alert and deterrence; perimeter tracking, etc.
- o Change in behavior of domestic or wild animals that detect intrusion
- o Variable-range patrols (interdiction is an option decided by community)
- o Blast wall, trench, pit, tunnel, cave, bunkers, cellar, subway or other shelter in tandem with early warning [See same heading]
- o Block sniper view with tarps, camouflage mesh, barricades; warn of exposed areas with signs or graffiti
- o Preventive engineering for building structures (cross consult with expertise in natural disaster mitigation.)
- o Improvised secondary/night shelters
- o Concealment; traceless encampment, crop colors and canopies that are less noticeable from the air
- o Prepare for being overrun by identifying and stocking hideaways, safe rooms, etc.
- o Avoid creating visible paths to settlement
- o Avoid being followed to settlement
- o Discipline with light, cook smoke, and noise (human and animal)
- o Discreet daily access to foraging, firewood, water, etc.
- o Conflict early warning → response plans [See same heading]

Safe movement
- o Unplanned flight
- o Planned flight—triggered by attack and early warning tripwire
- o Planned flight—preemptive self-displacement, absent a direct attack
- o Advance relocation of slow-moving elderly or infirm
- o Optimal travel group size, formation, and composition
    - o Larger if aim is deterrence, smaller if aim is evasion
    - o Unarmed (?) points, flanks, and rear guards for situational awareness and for a tripwire delay that enables the main body to escape
    - o May include armed individuals if aim is deterrence
- o Route selection
    - o Longer, more difficult route is often chosen
    - o Small party scouting of routes, especially just prior to transit
    - o Routes used on a frequent basis (commuting to work or sleep locations) are alternated
- o Cached food and medical supplies en route, insect/pest controls
- o Skills for living off the land (acquiring minimum of food, water, shelter)
- o Stolen or counterfeited forms, cards, and stamps for
    - o False identity that reduces harassment or harm
    - o False "safe passage" documents
- o Agreed-upon locations to reunite (rally points for individuals, families and subgroups)
- o Map and grid coordinate reading and other forms of orienteering
- o Off-road travel and
- o Night travel (orienteering, no lights, etc.)

Many suffer human and material losses in *unplanned* flight—and, if they could "go back in time," would surely plan ahead. This affirms the whole concept of preparedness support.

Planned flight does not denigrate civilians or aid belligerents. It can help civilians retain some control and deny belligerents conscripts and contraband.

Most often, movement through dangerous territory, whether amid evacuation or repatriation, is organized by civilians themselves.

Many choose to stay in place despite great physical risks. The reason is that in flight one can lose many existing securities—and be exposed to new dangers.

- o Travel on check-pointed roads can include cash for bribes
- o Practice traversing difficult terrain
- o Take advantage of inclement weather to move
- o Blend in the terrain and avoid being tracked
- o Noise discipline (silence, hand signals)
- o Use the escape services of reliable smugglers/traffickers
- o Landmine clues; retracing steps; marking, warning and informing
- o Mobile phones to call in support
- o Recognize layout of ambush and blocking points typical to combatants

Threat response *(reaction "on contact"; tactical as opposed to strategic "early warning→response" cited below)*
- o Lightweight evacuation supplies at the ready
- o Rehearsed response to varied forms of bombardment or incoming fire
- o Automatic sound alarm (siren, megaphone, pyrotechnics) to disorient, delay, or deter lightly-armed night raiders
- o Conflict early warning → response plans [See same heading]
- o Broken evacuation: fall back dispersal and regrouping plans (down to family level)
- o Evading infantry sweeps or encirclement
- o Rapid and semi-rapid hiding practices (nesting in ground cover or climbing trees; building blinds, spider holes, covers, camouflage, etc.)
- o Delaying, decoying, or diverting hostile pursuit
- o Recognizing and reacting to ambush sites
- o Extrication from mined areas
- o Skill and equipment in (urban) search and rescue
- o Skill in first aid and simple surgical fixes

Non-formal policing†
(Draws on many of the building block skill sets cited above)
- o Rudimentary patrolling, surveillence, incident verification, reporting, liaison, on-the-spot mediation, interdiction, etc.
- o Codes of conduct and accountability cross-checks/balances
- o Sampling of models:
  - o Semi-commercial anti-crime groups, urban and rural work-based security groups
  - o Vigilance groups, informal local government security structures, civil defense forces, ethnic or clan militias, political party militias
  - o Analagous examples: unarmed civilian auxiliaries to undergrounds and resistance groups

† Non-formal policing has a long history, elements of which are found in most traditions across the world. Some estimate 80% of security provision in Africa is non-formal. There is a big range of providers & authorizers. Some are law-abiding, some are not. Some are unarmed, some are not. Some partner with formal public safety/security organs, some do not. The violence they contend with stretches from crime to armed conflict. The UNDPKO, UNHCR and many aid agencies have fostered local policing groups amid conflict settings.

OECD and DfID reports advise that careful mapping of such groups and their track records can tell us which ones might be suitably supported. Support from wide swaths of the public itself stems from a given groups' local ownership, accountability, cultural relevance, effectiveness, accessibility, low cost, speed, sustainability, and resilience amid violence.

There exists the potential for non-formal policing groups to "go rogue". Lessons learned in this regard need to be applied.

The ability of such groups must be matched to the threats they are policing against. Outsiders at times think such action entails whistles and wearing tee-shirts; or fences and white flags. In reality, they often need upgraded "police-plus" skills for coping not just with violent crime—but with conflict

Conflict early warning → early response

o Sampling of purposes:
  o Warning (*intermediate*) wired to community; facts provide the advance motivation to begin planning contingency responses
  o Warning (*imminent*) wired to community; tripwire triggers set plans to get out of harm's way [see "Safe movement"]
  o Warning wired to prevention mechanisms that aim to engage civil society, parties to conflict, and "duty bearers"
  o Warning wired up and out to "rescuers" (such as formal public safety/security organs, peacekeepers, etc.)
  o Warning wired to armed community or patron [see "Arming"]

Positive conceptual and tactical frameworks for preparedness are found in *early warning doctrine* as well as *disaster risk reduction*. Originating in natural disaster warning and response, much of the reasoning and learning makes sense for conflict risk situations. Note that 3rd and 4th generation conflict early warning as well as DRR are quite locally led.

Conflict prevention has a weak track record. Locals thus need to prepare for a failure to prevent.

Outside duty-bearers or rescuers have a weak track record, often failing to mount a response. Locals thus need to complement early warning with *their own* contingency responses, at least for a provisional period.

  Note: Within the efforts by communities *to avoid violence noted above can be nested efforts by or on behalf of at-risk* individuals *to avoid violence (below).*

Skills and tactics by which individuals avoid violence

Women

o Discuss locations and situations to avoid
  o Situational awareness/planned threat response: homes, fields, roads
o Consolidate housing, within cultural norms and economic dictates (Might deter smaller assaults in which GBV is opportunistic)
  o Family home extensions or community compounds
o Disperse or hide housing, within cultural norms and economic dictates (Might foil larger assaults in which GBV is strategic)
o Men take on women's work roles inasmuch as cultural norms and work needs allow
o Reduce nonessential movement

Gender-based violence occurs in differing contexts each of which shape steps for avoidance. GBV tried by a few lightly armed men might be foiled by communal work and housing arrangements. But GBV attempted by larger armed groups opportunistically amid attacks on the community calls for women's precautions nested within larger community preparedness.

- o Optimal travel group size, formation, and composition [see above]
- o Deterrent escorts while in transit
- o Optimize or alter resource gathering to lessen exposure to danger
    - o Build water points at closer or more optimal locations
    - o Increase water catchment
    - o Buy firewood; use less wood (cook stoves, food w/ less cook time)
- o Shift towards livelihoods that lessen exposure to danger
- o Women's microenterprise mobile telephony doubles as communications net for safety purposes
- o Change appearance
    - o Dress and walk as a male or an old woman
    - o Cut hair to resemble a male
    - o Hold someone's baby so as to appear not a virgin
    - o Be unattractive—dirty one's face, wear foul-smelling clothes; persuade attacker one is menstruating, has a rash, etc.
- o Fabricate rumors of rampant STDs
- o Sexual relationships with male "protectors"; sex for food or favors
- o Stockpile post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kits to neutralize HIV infection and pregnancy resulting from rape
- o Moral authority persuades perpetrators that GBV harms their self interest
- o Discuss dilemmas of sexual violence so as to reduce *secondary assault* visited upon victims: social rejection, economic marginalization, etc.
    - o Discuss any culturally grounded ways to reduce stigma
    - o Prepare local nets to immediately assist victims of sexual violence
- o Prepare community contacts/nets for widows
- o Women may participate in non-formal policing, support peacekeeper operations, inform the design of camp layout, etc., thereby reducing incidence of gender-based violence
- o Women may bring unique advantages to navigating tense situations
    - o If hold high status, may have power to compel or shame belligerents
    - o If hold low status, belligerents may underestimate women, giving them more leeway to undertake protective measures
- o Women may bring unique advantages to (re)building inter-factional trust

Children
- o Preemptively relocate to safer areas, often with kin
- o Discuss locations and situations to avoid
- o Develop situational awareness
    - o Learn the habits of recruiters, traffickers, etc.
- o Discourage nonessential movement; discuss smart movement and optimal group size
- o School as a safety focal point:
    - o Use safe movement practices in transiting home and school
    - o Teachers impart basic safety messages at school
    - o Waive or subsidize school expenses to keep more children in school and out of danger
- o Establish alternative sites (bunkered if necessary):
    - o Hide classrooms, buildings of worship, sleeping shelters, etc.
- o Agree upon what to do and where to meet if separated
- o Make identification bracelets for infants and children, if advisable
- o Prepare community contacts/nets to do temporary fostering/adoption

Much is known about the unique vulnerabilities *and capacities* of women and children in conflict. Their experiences as conscripts, voluntary or not, prove their ability to partake in violence—which in turn prove their tactical ability to prepare for and avoid violence.

o Discuss the purpose of peace operations in the region and of mandates
   that they may have to protect children
o Raise landmine awareness
o Discuss dilemmas of abduction
   o Discuss forced soldiering and killing, mental and spiritual survival,
      escape, family and community forgiveness, etc**.**

Those susceptible to armed enlistment /conscription / radicalization
o See section on "Persuade followers to remain nonaligned and peaceful"
   in regard to mitigating the push and pull drivers behind enlistment
o Discuss locations and situations prone to abduction/indoctrination/
   conscription
   o Situational awareness/planned threat response: fields, roads, schools,
      markets, festivals, transportation hubs, sites of worship, etc.
   o Discreet, dispersed locations for informal schooling
   o Safer, monitored locations for youth recreational or social activities
o Guardian or safe space arrangements considered for unaccompanied/
   orphaned children
o If duties like travel to market expose men to suspicion, conscription,
   etc., women may take their place
o Men/boys dress as women/girls
o Communication net to warn of recruitment sweeps
o Identity documents
   o Having ID might avert bogus detainment and risk of conscription
   o Having fake ID with understated age might avert conscription
o Fein disability; appear unsuitable for conscription
o Rapid public response net *might* win release of those detained and at risk
   of conscription

Elderly & infirm
o Preemptively relocate vulnerable or slow-moving individuals
o Elders with previous crisis experience advise others on ways of
   improving safety and attaining life-critical sustenance
o Older men and women at times hold social stature that enables them to
   intercede and diffuse violence

Exposed leaders, service providers, activists
o Attempt collective or rotating leadership to reduce overexposure
o Raise profile with media, civil society, INGOs, & foreign governments
   as deterrent spotlight / accompaniment to raise political price of abuse
o *Conversely*, keep lower profile
   o Lay low, blend in
   o Low-profile operations [see "Life-Critical Services"]
o Standard precautions in negotiation, including advance intelligence,
   considered tone and tactics, etc.
o Standard precautions in information protection [See Low-Profile Service
   Delivery - Information]
o Seek backing of influential patrons
o Safe houses (single or network) and alternate sleeping quarters
o Adequate communications at residence

Exposed leaders include those in formal public or institutional structures (elected officials, civil society figures), professionals like doctors, teachers, religious leaders, or others who stand up for their people. Outside support of such dynamic leaders fosters their self-awareness, skills and activism and often contributes to positive change in society and governance.

Self-awareness and activism can, however, *also* increase leaders' vulnerability. Engagement means exposure. Outsiders do not often foresee unintended consequences; we seldom help

o Alternate identity documents o Standard precautions for movement/commuting o Use the escape services of experienced smugglers/traffickers o Proactive information-collection on threats such as arrest warrants, road blocks, death lists, etc. 🚫	leaders brace for reprisal. Yet with a false sense of security in our presence and imprimatur, they delay preparation for their own survival.

Affinity Groups[†]

Protective social units and networks

Stay together, pull together
o Plan for keeping the group intact in the face of pending violence
o Plan for regrouping if involuntarily separated by violence
o Plan for staying linked even while *voluntarily* separated (a very common method of pursuing safety, sustenance, and services)
o Plan for safety of exposed leaders who are lynchpins of affinity groups
o Resist the fear and hate mongering that demagogues use to fabricate new affinity groups based on violence toward others; friends/neighbors *across the new communal divide* agree to risk sheltering one another
o Reinforce spiritual strength, solidarity, and dignity
o Collaborate for safety
   o Primordial groups and networks of affinity provide safe refuge when governments, institutions and society are polarized or atomized by mass violence
o Collaborate for sustenance
   o This social architecture undergirds innumerable strategies for obtaining and sharing life-critical sustenance
o Collaborate for services
   o These units and networks are distribution pathways for life-critical services and the primal motivation to serve others regardless of risk 🚫

   Note: extra-community extra-territorial connectors, (patrons, hosts, Diaspora, etc.) are cited elsewhere in this inventory.

Side notes:

Affinity groups save the lives of millions. They become safer and more effective with increased experience.

Affinity groups here mean households, social nets, customary subgroups and communities apart from formal state or institutional structures. Such social units and networks are often as important to survival as material resources; often civilians' first asylum, first line of protection.

Many survivors attest that, more than anything else, it was a sense of solidarity which enabled them to endure.

Kin relations and social ties can exclude marginal groups. They may condone discrimination by ethnicity, faith, gender, age, etc.

Such affinity groups may even foster communal violence, a risk that any outside agency must be aware of and avoid.

IDPs forced into cities, urbanites forced into the countryside, and returnees back from long absences often do not benefit from such relations or ties.

Useful ties to patronage powers

Patrons intercede with threatening powers
o Church, mosque, monastery, etc. provides buffer
o Business sector and threatening powers foster calm for profit's sake

Seek patronage—perhaps for a price
o Activate or create these lines of support
   o Partial list: appeal or censure based on cultural norms of obligation; intermarry into patron lines; curry favor with threatening power, etc.

Side notes:

Patron's motives based on social unit or social contract can range from altruistic to paternalistic and calculated. "Benevolence" may be principled or conditional; symbiotic or parasitic.

For civilians who may otherwise face violence alone, a potential patron does not need to be pretty. Patrons can be self-aggrandizing, unelected, autocratic—and can

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[†] It is of course artificial to single out "affinity groups" since they undergird many or most of the activities undertaken in pursuit of life-critical safety, sustenance, and services cited in this inventory. But they are separated out here precisely because their fundamental importance merits it.

o Seek safety
    o Patron provides life-saving armed deterrence. The trade-off might be obligation to support the patron's armed activity
o Seek sustenance
    o Patron provides life-critical sustenance to those in need. As in a classic lord-serf relationship, trade-off might be deeper indebtedness
o Seek services
    o Patron provides or pays for life-critical services　🚫
	exact a price for their support. It is a calculation that belongs to the civilians themselves.
	
	Proximity to power is inequitable—some in society have more useful ties than others.
	Quid pro quo for winning patronage might be too harmful.
	Affiliation with the power may change to liability.

Armed Groups

Safety through arms
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    Note: this document emphasizes alternatives to armed action
o Civilians carry personal arms
o Civilians lay landmines outside their communities
o Communities form self-defense groups †
o Civilians or communities gain protection through payment, liaison, or allegiance with an armed group
 	
    🚫
	† Geneva Conventions state "Civil defense organizations have humanitarian tasks… that must be respected and protected. They are intended to protect the civilian population against the dangers of hostilities… and to ensure the conditions necessary for its survival [such as] warning, evacuations, shelters, rescue, public services, etc. .. . … the carrying of light individual weapons by civilian personnel for the purpose of maintaining order and for self-defense [is] not considered a harmful act." [2]
	
	Armed activity carries obvious deadly risks.

LIFE-CRITICAL SUSTENANCE [a]

Promote Livelihood

Influence a policy, institution, or process that impacts livelihood potential

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Note: This is a very limited sampling

o Advocate government support for land tenure, food and agricultural subsidies, labor standards, etc.
o Organize to protest harmful private banking practices
o Create marketing collectives to increase clout, improve selling price, cut out middleman, or reduce taxes
o Draw media and civil society attention to lack of government services and due entitlements
o Use traditional mechanisms to resolve dispute over resources
o Challenge customs disallowing some groups to accrue wealth or property
o Reach accommodation with rival communities in resource disputes
o Appeal to authorities about land grabbing
o Demand police protect roads and markets
o Private sector powers/patrons appeal to militias' self-interest to reduce depredations
o Cut deals with threatening powers to remove restrictions on livelihood, especially freedom of movement
o Use personal or patronage ties to win exemption from illicit taxation
o Make deals with middlemen who can assume risks of market activity (i.e. black marketers, or entrepreneurs from a non-persecuted group; can include doing business with the "enemy"- a fairly common type of social "capital" or "bridging")

> Policies, institutions, and processes (PIPs) can be a help or a hindrance for civilian efforts to pursue livelihood amid violence. Unresponsive or malevolent PIPs can undercut civilian capacity and exacerbate their vulnerability, limiting the full use of or access to their assets/capital†. And yet, civilians can at times engage those PIPs to promote their livelihoods, even in situations of chronic conflict. † Referring to human, natural, financial, social, and physical capital. To this many add 'political' capital: people's proximity to power and/or their ability to sway those holding power.
>
> Notably, all of the above have less to do with the "technical" aspects of food production or income generation and more to do with influencing actors and events.

> Efforts to influence such formal or informal structures and processes do better in more permissive settings. But as law and order decline, such engagement very often proves ineffective or too dangerous.

Conserve and Cushion Assets

Household consumption and expenditure

Adjust to reduced production, income, and market access
o Alter consumption
  o Eat fewer meals, watered-down meals (this might include deliberate unequal impacts per age and gender)
  o Use foods that are more safely attainable or affordable
  o Inventive recipes and processes for food preparation
  o Greater reliance on foraged foods and medicines
  o Keep children malnourished to qualify for feeding programs
o Reduce expenditure

> Household adjustments can *delay more dangerous choices*. Those cited here are only a limited sampling.

> There are limits to what can squeezed from household-level asset management.

[a] This refers not to "barely making a living" but to barely staying alive. Data overwhelmingly shows that during conflict, direct violence is far less of a risk than the indirect effects of violence such as the collapse of *life-critical sustenance* and *services*. Only 0.4% of the millions of deaths across DR Congo from were attributed directly to violence. In conflicts the world over, the majority die **preventable** deaths due to the disruptions caused by violence (which to some extent can be anticipated and **prepared** for). This means millions die away from the shooting.

- o Buy cheaper items or forgo nonessential purchases
- o Sell/trade high-value foods for larger quantity of cheaper foods
- o Send household members to eat elsewhere
- o Triage spending cuts outside of food security (i.e. education, etc.)
- o Delay expenditure
  - o Purchase on credit
- o Reduce investment
  - o Postpone deferrable improvements on real property
  - o Purchase fewer inputs (fertilizer, veterinary care, etc.)
  - o Forgo terracing, weeding, etc. when too dangerous
- o Other adjustments
  - o Recycle resources of every kind
  - o Seal and store grain for emergency reserve
  - o Conserve water and wood (efficient stoves, food w/ less cook time)
  - o Sell assets for food
  - o Pool assets and spread out risk within affinity groups
  - o Postpone or accelerate marriages depending upon the dowry delayed or accrued; new couples postpone living independently

Attempt to rebuild cushion of production and income
- o As conditions may allow, attempt typical development activity to help rebuild a life-critical buffer, most especially in terms of food security

Adapt and Expand Assets	

Adjust income activity
- o Change time of work
  - o Do more agricultural work at night
- o Change location of work
  - o Move services from store front to back room
  - o Make sale of wares mobile or discreet
- o Change currency of work
  - o Move from unstable paper currency to barter items

Subsistence agriculture (*and gardening*)
- o Farming and animal husbandry for self-sufficiency, though not necessarily full autarky
- o Agricultural methods like dibble sticking, hoe farming, slash and burn, shifting cultivation, etc.
- o Intensive gardening, in both rural *and* urban settings

Note A core strategy for civilians facing civil strife and economic turmoil is to minimize exposure to risks. They very often pursue subsistence agriculture for this reason. Though it provides a lower return, it often entails lower input and lower (economic) risk.

Foraging
- o Forage for food items
  - o Gathering, hunting, fishing

There are longer-term costs to financial and human capital in some of these measures.

Humanitarians may view cuts and conservation as regressive. Our focus is **forward** on '*post* conflict', '*developmental* relief' and 'early *recovery*'. We may be aware that the future might hold more violence, yet still promote development-type activity as being "protective" because it restores production, inventory, and income—thus a "cushion" against more shocks. But amid chronic instability, our efforts to help locals restore livelihoods and assets as they existed prior to conflict might be a *maladapted* response. People may be better served by "conflict-resistant" livelihood strategies and assets—ones that withstand a slide **backward**.

This activity saves the lives of millions. It becomes safer and more effective with increased experience.

Subsistence farming and gardening tend to be more "conflict-resistant" because they do not rely on systems or inputs disrupted by conflict like cash transactions, markets, trucking, storage, fertilizer, veterinary services, and more. Subsistence is also a tactical step: non-market sustenance is acquired at scattered and discreet locations, reducing the incidence of predation.

This activity saves the lives of millions. It becomes safer and more effective with increased experience. It is also more

o Theft, bribery, or extortion to get food from bakeries, markets, homes, warehouses, etc.
o Forage for natural products that are marketable
o Salvage foods left in fields, valuables left in conflict zones (may or may not belong to the salvager)

Diversifying or substituting

o Rental or day/wage labor arrangements that free one up from ownership
  Note: Ownership ties one to a place (like a farm), to a process (like marketing), and to visible assets—all of which are vulnerable amid violence
o Livelihood and marketing that entail less exposure to risky travel
o Shorter harvest cycle crops that improves the chance of getting food out of the ground and sold or cached more quickly
o Livestock that is more mobile
o Livestock that is hardier; more adapted to ecology where one is fleeing
o Livestock that is less 'unappealing' to looters
o New seed stocks adapted to ecology where one is fleeing
o Inventive blacksmithing to replace looted or abandoned implements
o Service skills, especially those meeting needs actually spurred by conflict, that pose a portable and profitable interim livelihood
o Remote and diverse locales, new caching techniques, livestock holdings that are more difficult targets, alternate grazing routes and locales

Civilians often seek livelihood alternatives that meet their bare needs and *also* are less exposed or tempting (to predators), are elusive or quickly mobile, are well-adapted to new conditions, and may capitalize on economic needs generated by conflict.

Emergency movement

o Shorter-term commuting
  o The "commute" may be predicated upon safety in a shadow settlement or aid camp at night and movement to work sites by day. The commute may be daily or much less frequent, as dictated by agricultural cycle and safety concerns
o Deliberate flight / evacuation / displacement

These activities save the lives of millions. They become safer and more effective with increased experience.

Emergency separation

o Able-bodied family members leave the home area to pursue earnings that can be sent back to the family
o Able-bodied family members stay behind and continue working and watching the family's assets, while the other members are sent to safer or better-provisioned locales

Social networks

o Social norms and structures of:
  o Shared resources
  o Shared financial risk
  o Collective laboring
  o Hosting traditions:
    o within community
    o among strangers who become a host community
  o Kinship exchange / reciprocity processes
  o Indigenous social welfare mechanisms [for more "institutional" mechanisms see section on "Life-Critical Services"]

These networks save the lives of millions and become more effective with increased experience.

These networks become exhausted under prolonged stress, especially without advance planning.

Patronage networks

o Patron provides or intercedes or enables access to life-critical sustenance

These networks, generally non-formal/non-state, save a great

o Religious entities provide succor or exert moral authority upon power-holders to do so o Business leaders try to keep workforce and market functions intact o Political leaders (whether elected to state-based jurisdictions or possessing authority conferred by social standing, social contract, or social unit) alter/substitute policies, institutions, and processes to improve civilians' life-critical sustenance o Parties to conflict (whether government line ministries or the relief wings of non-state armed groups) secure civilians' livelihood access and/or provide succor	many lives. Proximity to power is not equitable—some in society have more useful ties than others. Moreover, patronage sometimes comes with a price. The quid pro quo for winning patronage might become as harmful (indebtedness to economic elites, guilt by political association, reciprocal armed conscription) as the benefits bestowed.

Money networks
o Personal borrowing
o Commercial borrowing (banks, merchants)
o Locally pooled money for conflict-induced emergencies
o Remittances
   Remittance systems are protected against disruption by
   o Identifying fallback cash transfer agents
   o Planning alternate carrier/courier systems
   o Rebuilding communications, as in mobile phone systems
   o Identifying default remittance destinations
   o Keeping necessary documents
   o Finding proxies to do transactions
	These activities save the lives of millions. They become safer and more effective with increased experience.
	
	Remittances exceed all private flows of investment and official development assistance and are countercyclical in that diasporas give more just when aid agencies, donors, and investors withdraw due to imminent crisis.
	
	Borrowing may be a maladapted response if it leads to harmful indebtedness.

External relief o [For locally led relief, see section "Life-Critical Services"]	This activity saves the lives of millions—*when civilians can access it*. Sometimes *they must first* survive alone for months or years and then run a deadly gauntlet to reach foreign aid. External relief becomes a maladapted response if it leads to debilitating dependency. Foreign relief operations frequently shut down in the face of danger when they are most needed.
Pay offs o Pay fees, fines, taxes, or bribes in order to pursue livelihood activities unmolested	Buying off local enforcers assures the survival of many. Buying off local enforcers can leech war mobilization policy. Strategies to strip civilian assets (food, labor, supply) are sapped when, for a bribe, soldiers or political cadres *do not* enforce demands for contraband and conscripts. This means less fuel for conflict. Another view holds that pay offs can reinforce the violence and corruption afflicting a society. This would hold true when extortion benefits a

| | violent spoiler as opposed to a simple unpaid soldier. |

Shadow & Coping economies

Note: All the above arguably are actions in the coping economy. More are cited below. There are many ways to frame this. Wartime economies operate at varied connected levels with varied but overlapping actors. The tipping point between licit and illicit, or sustainable and unsustainable, is often unclear. Never—even in a failed state—has everything failed. Economic functions get reinvented; every need gets commoditized. Some profit while others more downstream stay barefoot—but alive. As used here, "petty" means subsistence level and "larger-scale" refers to something more syndicated and profitable.

These activities save the lives of millions. They become safer and more effective with increased experience.

Wartime economy experts often stress that distinctions should be made between those who violently profit from conflict and those trying to survive amid it. This distinction is rarely found in the aid community which takes a rather "hands off" view of the shadow and coping economies. But as Fred Cuny noted, "In many situations, understanding and manipulating market forces can be far more important and effective than classic relief operations." [3]

Some of these actions are illicit or innately harmful to oneself or others, others can *become* maladapted to the point of harm. They are indicated by "⇒" here.

o Marginal production: crafts, bricks, charcoal, etc. ⇒ harmful products
o Buy or sell on black market ⇒ same, but entailing lethal products or benefitting belligerents
o Registration for relief aid ⇒ multiple (bogus) registrations
o Consumption of relief aid ⇒ unauthorized sale of relief aid
o Petty, small-scale resource extraction ⇒ larger-scale resource extraction
o Petty, small-scale smuggling ⇒ larger-scale smuggling
o Petty trade in undeclared (cross-border) goods ⇒ larger-scale trade
o Hoarding ⇒ price speculation and rate gouging
o Petty corruption ⇒ larger-scale corruption
o Begging ⇒ syndicated, coerced begging
o Menial, poorly compensated labor ⇒ compulsory labor
o ⇒ Prostitution
o ⇒ Cultivation of outlawed products (poppy, etc.)
o ⇒ Drug dealing
o Violent exploitation
    o ⇒ Protection rackets
    o ⇒ Armed taxation

Remote & cross-border markets
o Organize jungle or bush markets or trading sites
o Negotiate discreet cross-line markets with adversaries
o Commute cross border to safe markets

Strip and Transfer Assets [b]

Redeeming
o Collect debts or rent due
o Withdraw savings, loans, or shares locked up in an enterprise

Anything withdrawn/divested can later be re-deposited and reinvested.

Unless done carefully, such action can affect the solvency of institutions and stir panic.

Caching
o Food surpluses (esp. salted, smoked, or dried foods), medicines, shelter

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[b] Today's "emergency livelihoods" discourse stresses that overt ownership of assets can *increase* one's vulnerability. Thus in many "conflicts" (often better described as asset-stripping enterprises), civilians try to strip first, converting or transferring their assets. Affinity groups usually serve as "first responders" amid crises. Transferring assets to this support network has multiple benefits. First, it protects family wealth. Second, it removes resources that actually invite attack and harm. Third, it keeps that wealth out of the hands of criminals and belligerents, giving less encouragement and strength to their asset stripping; less fuel for the fire. Fourth, it puts those resources into the hands of trusted first responders, strengthening that network. This is vital because such nets often become exhausted, thus requiring displaced persons to make dangerous secondary and tertiary flights.

sheeting, seed stock, portable livelihood tools, cash, documents, and valuables hidden near probable flight routes and rally points o Practices of camouflaging caches and controlling for insect/pest damage	
Liquidating o Assets are converted into portable or concealable currency such as small amounts of gold, silver, or jewelry o Assets are converted (whether sold, pawned, or put up as collateral) for cash that is mailed, wired, or electronically transferred to safe repositories or to first responders in one's affinity network	Amid violence, physical assets can be a liability. So too, *in countless ways survival can be bought*. Liquidating assets is thus an extremely common tactic. Indeed, civilians often liquidate the commodities that aid agencies give them for the sake of safety, mobility, and discretionary pay-offs.
	The predatory instincts of buyers can be aroused by "distress sales" (a hallmark of forced removal) resulting in prices depressed by having a lot of the same kinds of possessions and properties on the market at the same time.
Dismantling o Strip, bury, or sell roofing and other building materials	Civilians often save such material for reuse and avoid a future rebuilding expense.
Transferring o Transfer portable possession to safer locations o Plan ahead for affordable transport of the above possessions	
Temporary guardianship o Leave possessions in the care of trusted parties who are less likely to be looted or displaced o Leave fixed properties and land in the custody of trusted parties who may be able to provide nominal maintenance and oversight against squatters, looters, etc.	
Temporary forfeiting o In anticipation of needing to flee, civilians secure any documentation (titles, deeds, birth certificates, identity cards, etc.) that will later help them reclaim their land or fixed properties	In conflicts around the globe civilians cede their land and fixed properties with every intention of reacquiring them someday. Cases of ethnic cleansing that forever change the demography of land ownership are rare. More common challenges for a returnee are squatters or confused title status due to oral agreements, challenges in claiming inheritance, or other problems that could have been anticipated.

Scorching
o Dissuade belligerents, violent marauders, or squatters by damaging or destroying one's own property. This is done after:
  o a feasible level of stripping, dismantling, and salvaging, and
  o alternate arrangements for safety, sustenance, and shelter
o Dissuade belligerents, violent marauders, or squatters by creating the impression that property is *uninhabitable*. This might be done by
	Civilians who perceive that their properties are drawing violence closer to them will at times destroy them. The fact (or the appearance) of having already been burned out and looted sometimes prevents deeper harm to life and livelihood.

fabricating:
- o bogus landmine markers (known only to the community), the illusion of poisoned wells or water points, rumors of curses (potent in many places) or diseases, the fiction of armed backers, etc

Destruction of key assets and voluntary displacement carry clear challenges and risks.

LIFE-CRITICAL SERVICES [c]		
Conventional-profile Service Delivery		
Conventional engagement to maintain or win access o Negotiate, advocate, attempt media pressure to win consent for work o Tap protective social units and networks o Tap ties to threatening powers o Make tolerable pay-offs	🚫	These strategies, though often successful, have their limits.
Conventional staff security o Acceptance o Protection o Deterrence	🚫	Local providers of relief or welfare services have often survived due to these strategies. Yet this "security triangle" of strategies frequently fails to safeguard them. Though outside agencies often assume otherwise, local providers are guaranteed neither local acceptance nor enhanced protection because of their ties and knowledge. Being local can even create risks.
Low-profile Service Delivery		
------------ *Note: When conventional service delivery becomes too dangerous, local providers sometimes adopt tactics of anonymity and avoidance in order to continue helping their people while partially or completely "off-the-grid". Sometimes, as our local staff or partners, they even do this with our support when we are forced to pull out and work through them remotely. Locally led low profile service delivery has won praise in several settings. The challenges it faces stem not from the strategy per se, but from the tactics chosen. Such work can be safer and more efficient; such operations can have both a low profile and popular acceptance.*	🚫	These activities save the lives of millions. They become safer and more effective with increased experience. Foreign agencies outsource risky work to local staff or partners via "remote management". Tactics for low-profile service delivery such as cited here can help that work become safer. Clearly, low-profile work can be labeled subversive, and local providers do often try to assure their security by being wholly transparent with and subordinate to parties in a conflict. This document deals instead with those times when openness will either get them killed or end any meaningful aid. In such situations, they must be able to survive violence before they can serve amid it.

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[c] This refers to services addressing killers like disease and malnutrition. Data overwhelmingly shows that during conflict, direct violence is far less of a risk than the indirect effects of violence such as the collapse of *life-critical sustenance* and *services*. Only 0.4% of the millions of deaths across DR Congo from were attributed directly to violence. In conflicts the world over, the majority die **preventable** deaths due to the disruptions caused by violence (which to some extent can be anticipated and **prepared** for). This means millions die away from the shooting.

Information *(or "humanitarian intelligence")*

Information gathering

o Awareness of *priority* threat indicators
   o Shifts in military behavior—changes in command, strength, and morale; alterations in patrol; movement of fresh equipment and supply; unusual intelligence activity; increases in garrison size, upgrading of roads or extension of outposts; laying more mines, etc.
   o Shifts in political behavior—many indicators, but most often: rise of powers with dangerous backgrounds, passage of restrictive laws, vilification of supposed "enemies", clamp down on media and civil society, etc.
   o Shifts in treatment of aid workers—new quasi-legal impediments; rising rhetorical abuse against foreigners and their local counterparts that inflame local opinion; increased surveillance or harassment of service delivery
o Providers' own discreet word-of-mouth networks
   o Social units and networks
   o Paid informants
   o Close coordination with trusted influentials among the populace on security updates, needs assessments, details of upcoming distributions or services, monitoring and evaluation
o Commercially available radio scanners
o Public domain satellite imagery (like Google Earth) confirm damage to Infrastructure, aid route planning, etc.
o Discreet observation
o Foster constant situational awareness in every worker

Information assessment (and an 'action footing')

o Cross-verify reports from varied sources
   o Access first-hand accounts deemed reliable from conflict areas
   o Access sources of news deemed reliable for interpretation of events
   o *Anticipate* the scenario(s) which an assessment might yield; *proactively* consider and build staff consensus for actionable response(s) even before a critical threshold is crossed

Information protection

o Compartmentalization
   o Need-to-know protocols; physical separation of certain information, operations and staff
o Be aware of surveillance; take steps to co-opt or avoid it
o Document safety
   o Burn rubbish; have most sensitive exchanges in person rather than on paper; minimize paper trails on projects, purchases, etc., watch for signs of illicit entry or tampering at offices; computers under lock and key; password access; files encrypted, file backups stored off-site; removable media; clean disk security; anti-virus and firewall software; etc.
o Safeguard identities of staff and beneficiaries
o Confidentiality:

As Macrae and Leader say, accurate information on conflict is "a precondition for effective and principled humanitarian action." [4]

Safeguarding information is especially important in aid agencies that politically sensitive activity such as human rights, civil society, good governance, rule of law, ending impunity, and social justice.

Mary Anderson notes "strategies for delivering aid secretly thwart thieves' need for knowledge." [5]

Phillipe Le Billon adds "keeping the time and location of delivery secret can reduce opportunity for looting. Risks can be displaced by publicly announcing a food convoy in a different location." [6]

- o for work with victims of abuse and sources of sensitive information
- o Cover stories
- o Avoid infiltration
    - o Be aware of predatory efforts to learn/abuse operational details, or political efforts to discredit the organization
    - o Do more detailed vetting of possible new hires
    - o If some are recruited to inform on your work due to intimidation or desperate need, consider how the threats they face could be lowered
    - o Base hiring decisions partly on affinity ties—family, tribal, party or other connections—while retaining checks on abuse

Disinformation
- o Distributions or services onto a mobile or irregular or unannounced basis with advance notice limited to the parties needed to assure its effectiveness
- o Manipulate information such as planting errant reports, fake rumors, forged documents, maps with misleading marks, or phony radio orders

Communication
- o A layered mix of low-to-high tech communications, as appropriate
- o Prioritize equipment that is suitable for a discreet and mobile workplace and train on it far enough in advance
- o Simple sources of power off the electrical grid
- o Need-to-know only protocols
- o Keep communications undetected, encrypted, or deniable
- o Flat, cell-based contact networks apt for a discrete and dispersed workplace
    - o The most effective networks are often built on groups of affinity

Safe movement
- o Replace recognizable vehicles with private or commercial transport and alternate the chosen transport
- o Replace vehicles with pack animals for off-track travel
- o Route selection
    - o Longer, more difficult route is often chosen
    - o Routes used on a frequent basis (workers' commute, delivery routes) are alternated
    - o Small party scouting of routes, especially just prior to transit
- o Cache supplies closer to intended distribution or service sites so that transit to these sites is less of a logistical or security challenge
- o Master off-road travel and night travel
    - o Includes traversing difficult terrain; taking advantage of inclement weather to move
    - o Take full advantage of surprise and *initiative*; of choosing when, where, and how to move and keeping dangerous groups off-balance
- o Use multi-faction networks "to orchestrate *relays* where goods, equipment, sensitive information, cash or medical cases are handed off from one cell or staff member to another… so as to get safely from one place to another." [7] This enables service "reach" across a landscape of patchwork loyalties.
- o Mobile phones to call in support

Threat response
o Automatic response to varied forms of bombardment or incoming fire
o Skill in first aid and simple surgical fixes

Threats at a "workplace"
o "Workplace" can be downsized and a workforce dispersed. Response
   thus may focus more on evasive measures for individuals than on
   evacuation plans for entire organizations [see "Deconstruction"]
o Fallback plans for when a portion of operating network is compromised
o Lightweight evacuation supplies at the ready
o Protocols for destroying records, moving or disabling equipment, etc
o Anticipate confiscation of financial assets—have back up plans ready

Threats during movement (beyond the Safe movement options cited above)
o Recognizing and reacting to ambush sites
o Recognizing and reacting to mined areas
o Evasive driving techniques
o Delaying, decoying, or diverting hostile pursuit

Threats on contact with aid recipients
o Build strong coordination with trusted influentials in the populace
   o Such coordination does not require public visibility
o Select location least likely to draw unwanted attention
o Select commodities least likely to draw unwanted attention

Classic "truck and chuck" forays can risk unsafe, inefficient, inequitable distribution of aid. The ground should be better prepared for such hit and run aid.

Deconstruction (Safe sites)

Downgrade identity
o Stop branding; furl flags and remove magnetic sign logos when wise
o Ditch or falsify identification
o Obscure agency's paper (and funding) trail
o Have media outreach, but operations leave no footprint
o Through intermediary, inform belligerents of general mission, so as to
   convey respect and avert misjudgments about the mission
o Reveal agency's identity only at distribution or service times
o Give all credit for their work to "more acceptable" partners
o Discreetly co-locate with another, more accepted entity
o Work under pseudonyms or take on the appearance of a different type of
   organization
o "Partial disclosure" of their work to trusted, influential actors only
o Go into periods of "hibernation"
o Publicly close an agency then quietly reconstitute it with no legal
   personality or authorization
o Publicly conduct programs that belligerents will tolerate, while privately
   aiding groups most at risk

All of these tactics of selective transparency have been used in Iraq—some by UN and major aid agencies through their local proxies

We often equate presence with "visibility", and transparency with "acceptability". But there are many shades between visible and invisible, thus more choices than these false dichotomies would imply. Also, historical analogies show overwhelmingly that overt visibility is not needed by a movement to ensure its acceptance from and coordination with a population

Downsize infrastructure

o Shift from offices to homes; from warehouses to innocuous buildings o Rotate "office" locations o Disperse into smaller, spread facilities (especially if sites are subject to artillery or airstrikes) o Use portable gear for computing (laptops?) and communications (sat-phones?) o Conversely, adopt/adapt simpler, cheaper technologies o Replace expensive standing motor pool with an assemblage of porters, pack animals, carts, or contracted or private motor vehicles to provide ad-hoc transport that can get a distribution done and then melt away	The main attraction and objective of attacks on aid often is its *properties* not its personnel. The prime targets are offices, motor pools and warehouses. Fortunately, these features of our aid "footprint" can be downsized, dispersed, or done away with.
Disperse, monetize, or outsource supplies o Cache equipment and supplies o Scatter warehouses o Aim for last minute local acquisition and quick distribution so that supplies do not sit for long o Break large distributions into smaller ones o Use cash transfers, commodity coupons, or promissory note systems in lieu of commodities o Monetize commodities with merchants o Outsource supply distribution	Careful protocols make cash a more elusive target than commodities. Practice shows cash is used wisely by recipients and can stimulate local markets Voucher, coupon, and outsourcing arrangements with merchants reduce aid's logistical tail and turn shops into "aid warehouses". To the extent that practices are privatized and localized, aid operations may become more conflict resistant
Disperse staff o Small groups independently work and resources themselves—but also converge for scaled up joint action o Need-to-know protocols might have staff aware of the identities of only a limited number of colleagues o Prepare staff mentally for arrest, imprisonment, and physical abuse o Explore options for distance expertise (telemedicine, etc.))	In Iraq "a wide range of [service providers employ an] in-house network of cells or individuals that work independently when staff mobility is poor, but interdependently when it improves" [8] Moreover, the collapse of one cell does not compromise the whole network. Staff dispersal is not just a matter of physical geography but social geography as well; not just an issue of their safety but *also* of leveraging the trust they exercise within varied segments of the populace. This refers again to networks of affinity. Trust is the password to access, especially in conflicts that are communally, militarily, or geographically fragmented.
Disperse beneficiaries o Discourage consolidation of beneficiary populations, especially if it has not yet occurred and is not absolutely warranted for safety purposes	i.e. Both WFP and CARE have decentralized operations when the threats of attack and looting existed, dispersing beneficiaries, convoys, and distribution areas.[9] Experience shows dispersion of beneficiaries can at times be managed and sustained, as it promotes more local integration and self-sufficiency. Efforts toward autonomy create wise

	economies that may offset whatever is lost in classic camp "economy of scale".

Delegate work
o Identify entities that might be in a stronger position to do service delivery and seek a partnership or transfer of responsibility. In past conflicts, the more capable entity often proved to be
   o mosques, in Iraq
   o clan-based networks, in Somalia
   o private contractors, in Uganda
   o civil society groups, in the Philippines
   o community-based organizations, in El Salvador
   o welfare wings of a reliable armed party in Eritrea and Burma
	Service providers in the mold of an "aid" or "welfare" agency need to know their limits—and the relative strengths of other possible vehicles for service delivery.

Community Substitute Action[d]	

Health
 	
 Nutrition and food security
o See section on "Life-critical sustenance"
 	
 Physical health
o Hidden or bunkered clinics and pharmacies
o Black market and smuggled medicines
o Traditional medicines, prophylaxes, etc.
o Traditional healers and cures
o Unregistered midwives or traditional birth attendants
o Vast number of basic preventive health messages disseminated by local health volunteers
 	
 Mental health
o Socially and spiritually-based coping mechanisms for psychosocial trauma, community reintegration, etc.
o Community contacts/nets to do temporary fostering/adoption
o Recreation and diversion
   o for children (toys, books, improvised playgrounds, etc.)
   o for youth (sports, music, hobbies, clubs, work, etc.)
   o for adults (child care relief, role in dignified civic action, etc.)
   o for elders (companions, mentoring or leadership roles, etc.)
o Community effort to reduce secondary effects of sexual violence visited upon victims: social rejection, economic marginalization, etc.
   o Culturally grounded ways to reduce stigma
   o Local nets to immediately assist victims of sexual violence
o Community contacts/nets for widows
o Religious, cultural, recreational, or educational activities to reduce feelings of stress and isolation, provide psychological relief from brutality, and reinforce feelings of continuity and hope
o Symbolic acts of resistance to reaffirm dignity and identity
o Self-policing of alcohol/drug consumption, domestic violence, anti-social or criminal behavior
	Amid violence, families and communities usually pursue remedies for the dire threats of malnutrition and disease. Our local aid counterparts cannot always extend substantial resources—*but may be able to support informal community action in these sectors*.
	
	No discussion of civilian survival can be limited to material inputs and conscious strategies. There are always other ethereal forces at work. A sense of hope can be what ultimately governs whether endangered civilians pull together or pull apart. Hope forms within and between individuals. It comes when people realize *they* have the ability to resist and perhaps outlast assaults on their identity, dignity, and their very lives. Hope can be the invisible but essential ingredient of mental health.

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[d] Civilians always create temporary "workarounds" for the damage being done to infrastructure (of transportation, electricity, water, banking & finance, health, and education). These buffer the impacts of damage until the day peace and reconstruction can occur.

o Radios (hand-crank or other appropriate-tech) to entertain and break sense of isolation

Water and sanitation
o Traditional water development
   o Shallow wells, catchment, dams
o Basic preventive health messages (avoid transmission of sickness, maintain hygiene, boil water, make soap, etc.) disseminated by local health volunteers

Energy
For electricity
o Bicycle power
o Solar power
o Methane gas from animal waste
o Makeshift turbines (wind and water)

For fuel for combustion engines
o burning plastics for oil derivatives

Banking and finance
o See section on "Adapt and Expand Asset / Money networks"

Education

Note: There has been much written about protecting education. Much of it is premised upon an ability to influence violent actors and events (persuade parties of norms protecting education or children, making schools inviolate spaces, etc.) or the presence of international programs. True preparedness in the realm of education will not presume such influence or presence; it recognizes that such inviolability is rare and that damage will be done. This section on Community Substitute Action is about working around damage already done to public infrastructure and services.

o Offset the loss of education professionals
   o Place teachers on "mobile circuits" to reach more locations
   o Hire paraprofessionals through faster, more flexible certification
   o Initiate "teacher of teacher" programs
   o Borrow from informal pedagogies used to reach wide swaths of population with concise educational messages (such as landmine awareness and disaster preparedness)
   o Distribute curricular materials to parents or family members with basic literacy and numeracy to use in home
o Mitigate pressure on material resources
   o Waive or subsidize school expenses to keep more children schooling
   o Ramp up standard efforts to get at least rudimentary school supplies widely available, for example by disseminating kits, substituting supplies locally, etc.
o Safer sites: less about schools, more about schooling
   o Conduct schooling outdoors, in homes, abandoned buildings, etc.
   o Disperse schooling activity
   o See section "Skills and tactics by which communities avoid violence"

> Non-formal pedagogies have been used in every country and culture across time. And of course amid armed conflict "underground schooling" is an old practice. In the end, schooling only requires students, teachers, nominal resources and safer sites.

ENDNOTES

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[2] Additional Protocol I, Section I, item 7, Part IV, *Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*, Convention IV of 12 August 1949.

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[5] Mary B. Anderson and Marshall Wallace, "Challenges for Food Aid in Conflict Situations", *Hunger Notes*, found at www.world hunger.org/articles/global/armedconflict/ Anderson.htm; p. 2.

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[7] Greg Hansen, *Briefing Paper #2: Operational Modalities in Iraq,* one of a series of briefing papers on NGOs' and others' humanitarian operational modalities in Iraq, NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq, January 2008; p. 3.

[8] Greg Hansen, *Briefing Paper #2: Operational Modalities in Iraq,* one of a series of briefing papers on NGOs' and others' humanitarian operational modalities in Iraq, NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq, January 2008; p. 4.

[9] Susanne Jaspars, *Solidarity and Soup Kitchens: A Review of Principles and Practice for Food Distribution in Conflict*, Overseas Development Institute, Humanitarian Policy Group Report 7, August, 2000; esp. pages 3, 8, 12, 25, 27 and 37.