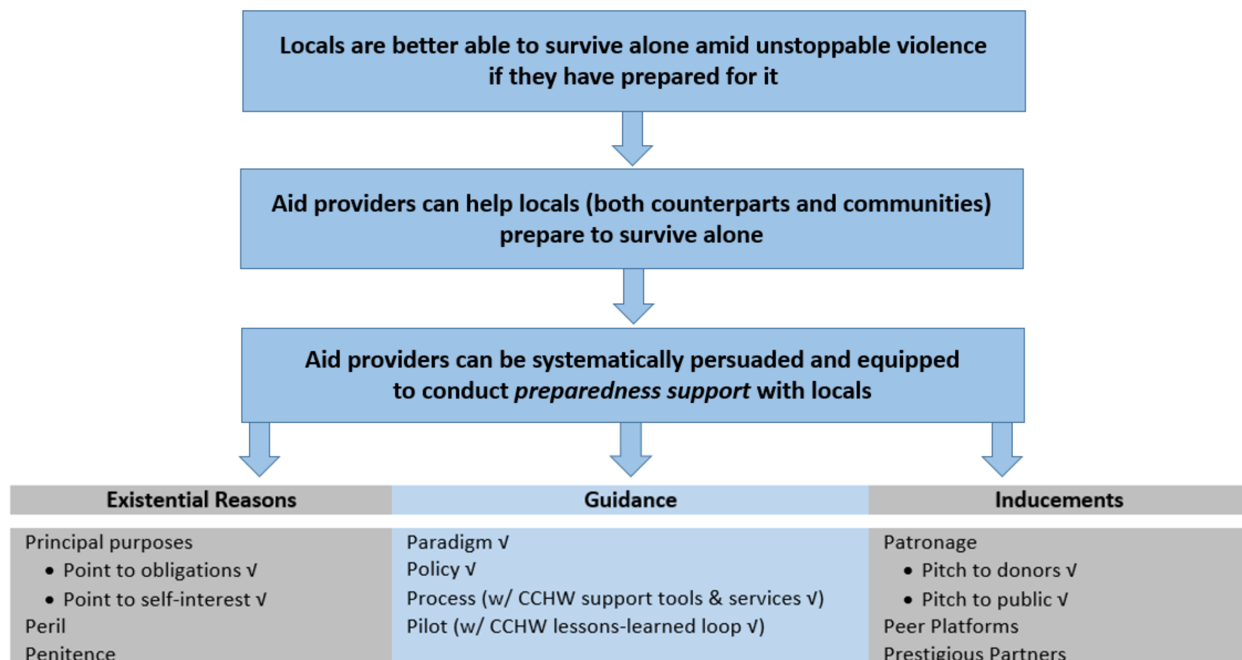
Center for Civilians in Harm's Way

~ ~ Incentivizing the Aid Community to Undertake Preparedness Support ~ ~

Many renowned individuals and institutions have urged the aid community to better support the ability of its local counterparts and communities to survive alone amid violence before it loses access to them. But as noted by the Center for Civilians in Harm's Way (CCHW) and others, policies and practices in support of such preparedness still have not yet been systematized within the industry.

There are many who sense that helping civilians brace for what may be unstoppable violence is an idea whose time has come. But they have been provided scant guidance—hence faint incentive— for operationalizing it. The onus is on advocates of this nascent paradigm to provide more concrete and comprehensive scaffolding. We have failed to push beyond one-off forums and reports, isolated assertions, or individual contracts and projects.

Aid agencies will often be the best actors available to help locals mobilize early enough for self-preservation. Yet simply saying or even knowing that is not enough. A strategic campaign is needed. One that tackles institutional motivations on several levels; one that persuades and equips them for the job. The CCHW is best positioned to provide background support for the elements below which are "√" marked.



EXISTENTIAL REASONS

Principal Purposes

Core Obligations

Local counterparts and communities are better able to survive alone amid unstoppable violence if they have prepared for it. The aid community is not released from its obligations by noting that at-risk populations have tremendous capacity to fend for themselves. Quite the opposite. This knowledge is now its burden. The onus is on the agency—which might work with and for locals in the months or years before violence finally forces it out—to consider what possible steps it can take to reinforce this clear potential of locals for self-preservation. What obliges an aid service provider to consider this? The existential reasons for doing so may be expressed in several ways that these admirable organizations can relate to.

Scenario: Violence is proving unstoppable and it is likely that we, the aid agency, will need to pull back. Our local counterparts and communities will be alone in harm's way.

If in agreement with the following key points, then please skip to "**Core Self-Interest**" on p. 7.

- The *Humanitarian Imperative* requires us to consider all possible steps to prevent or alleviate suffering, which can include helping locals prepare for their own self-preservation.
- Our *Duty of Care* to the local counterparts we work through after pulling back requires us to help them adapt and prepare so they may serve the populace as safely as possible.
- The *Do No Harm* maxim logically includes our obligation not to lull and then leave locals ill prepared in harm's way.

The humanitarian imperative

There are some bedrock obligations which many aid agencies would consider nearly inseparable from their institutional persona; their very reason for being. One would be the humanitarian imperative. As the Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief says, "The humanitarian imperative comes first."[1]

All possible steps?

As stated in the global Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, "We affirm our belief in the humanitarian imperative and its *primacy*. By this we mean the belief that all possible steps should be taken to prevent or alleviate human suffering." It goes on to say "agencies are frequently in situations where" there are "direct threats to people's well-being or to their means of survival, or to their safety. In the context of armed conflict, the *paramount* humanitarian concern is to protect people against such threats."[2] It says of the humanitarian imperative that "nothing should override this principle."[3]

If aid's highest "imperative" is negotiable, then what does it really stand for?

Yet other considerations *have* overridden this principle throughout modern history. Of our repeated, collective failures to address the worst kind of human rights abuses—mass atrocity and genocide—Samantha Power once asked: "How can something so clear in retrospect become so muddled at the time by rationalizations, institutional constraints, and a lack of imagination?"[4] Clearly in the view of her and many others, states and institutions often fail to take "all possible steps" and are on the wrong side of history as it unfolds.

It is not a rhetorical waste of time to ask anew: What is imperative? What is possible? We might do well to remember the remarkable American aid worker Fred Cuny. Of him it was once said, "Fred's whole approach was, 'Think big—very little is impossible.' He raised the threshold of impossibility, and being around him,

you either got fed up… or he made you raise your own threshold. 'What would Fred do in this situation?' You ask yourself that and it immediately pushes you forward, because you know he wouldn't ever quit."[5]

As to the "humanitarian imperative" and what steps it may possibly require, we have two choices. We can view the word "imperative" in the context it was coined—as an aspirational normative construct. Or we can see it the way that those we propose to help do. Phillip Lancaster, Gen. Dallaire's confidant in Rwanda, said those actually at risk live in "a separate world" where it is the "survival imperative" that keeps them alive in the moment.[6] If through overly complex and compromised interpretations our humanitarian imperative loses the simplicity of their survival imperative, then we risk becoming irrelevant in their twilight world.

For them there is no debate over competing principles: survival is the bedrock existential question they face. There is no awaiting the CNN effect, no lacking a domestic constituency to act, no compassion fatigue for their own people. There is no bureaucratic inertia, no diplomatic impasse, and no pulling back when unable to win consent from thugs. There is no ambiguous mandate or definition or nomenclature to endlessly debate. There is no political cover, no humanitarian "alibi" or "fig leaf" for half-way measures. And there is no demand for greater "force protection" or an "exit strategy" as preconditions for entering the fray. They are full in. This is their home, their calculus, their own survival.

The humanitarian imperative is a fundamental obligation that should be revisited with aid agencies as part of this campaign of persuasion. It is of paramount concern that we consider any and all possible steps they can take to help brace local counterparts and communities for what may be unstoppable violence. If there is a way to avoid having this imperative again become, in Power's words, "muddled by rationalizations, institutional constraints, and a lack of imagination," perhaps it is by taking some of the gentility out of our discussions and forcing ourselves to view it as those in harm's way do: as a survival imperative.

A duty of care

What happens when security degrades to the point that foreign aid personnel must pull out? When strategic thought is given this fundamental question it has typically focused—in descending order—on expatriate evacuation; stewardship of programs and properties by local counterparts; local staff security; and lastly local partner security. That is to say, we differentiate our "duty of care" for those doing dangerous work for us depending upon who they are. This bias is most evident when expatriate staff retreat to safer locations, hoping to continue work via remote management of their local counterparts. A range of reporting shows that all too often we still hand them the office keys ill prepared for what will come next. Our local staff and local partners become first-tier targets for whom we offer second and third-class protection.

Local staff ill prepared

As early as 2000, Koenraad Van Brabant concluded that, "The security of national staff remains a painful weakness; there is even resistance to facing the issue."[7] Yet a decade later another authoritative report found that while agencies have "increasing awareness of the need to provide better and more equitable duty of care to [host country] staff, they nearly universally admit that they have a long way to go in this regard."[8] "National staff receives a disproportionately low share of training and material resources" for security.[9] Moreover, "few organizations have a specific policy on what security-related equipment would be handed over to national staff or local partners" upon evacuation.[10] "Statistical analysis points overwhelmingly to the conclusion that aid work is becoming increasingly dangerous for national staff, and safer for international staff."[11]

Local partners ill prepared

At the bottom of this ranking order come the local groups that we work with. One report concludes that, "In terms of local partner organisations there is more of a gap to bridge." They are "used and treated as service providers rather than partners," and "security training provided for [them] is still a rare occurrence…"[12] Another report finds that in terms of our security policies, training and support, "local NGOs [ranked] the lowest of all."[13] As of 2011, "With one or two exceptions, few agencies and INGOs reported discussing with their implementing partners the partners' security needs, or budgeting for security capacity or equipment."[14]

"Going remote" transfers risk

They are made vulnerable by a fixed infrastructure and riskily exposed as they handle our very alluring assets.

It is often claimed that when we retreat into distance management mode we essentially transfer risk to our local counterparts. Furthermore, aside from removing risk-averse foreigners, remote programming does, "not necessarily overcome the operational constraints to service delivery that led to its adoption in the first place."[15] The constraints are driven by insecurity. A report by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office found "there has been little examination of the security implications of [remote management] operations for national staff."[16] But the implications are evident: our local staff and partners are easy targets with a street address. They are made vulnerable by a fixed infrastructure and riskily exposed as they handle our very alluring assets. We give them the office keys and a public promotion at the same moment such a high profile could put them at great risk. "Working for an international agency exposes national staff to risks they are unlikely to face otherwise."[17] Studies find our remote operations have been reactive and ad hoc, typically reflecting last-ditch efforts rather than careful contingency procedures. They have lacked tactical foresight; without plans for a strategic exit or return.[18] One authoritative 2010 report adds that "the dearth of agency guidelines and procedures on the subject seems particularly problematic given how widely the practice is used in insecure settings."[19]

There are reasons why we invest little in the security of our local counterparts. One is the dubious assumption that they are safer than expatriates. Another is the view that we do not have legally, and cannot absorb fiscally, the same contractual responsibility for them. Reasons such as these are either flawed and can be debunked, or have some merit yet can be fixed, as is discussed in a forthcoming CCHW briefing paper on "aid industry mindsets."

Ethos and equity

Legal and contractual norms do not offer the strongest argument for giving more attention local counterpart security preparedness. A stronger "pressure point" has to do with the humanitarian ethos. Putting local counterparts further in harm's way without commensurate preparations may amount to an *ethical* dereliction of the agency's duty of care. This is an anathema to the very purpose of an aid service provider and completely incompatible with its institutional persona.

The fact that it raises questions of bedrock obligation is proven in the scorching experience of many expatriate workers who have evacuated only to later return and find their former counterparts killed or disappeared. David Reiff once charged: "The deeper reality—that Western aid workers were Westerners first and aid workers second—could not have been plainer, above all to the Rwandans. One of the buried traumas of the humanitarian international that is a searing legacy of that killing time is that when the major agencies redeployed they found that most of their Tutsi local staff had been murdered."[20]

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It is very uncomfortable to acknowledge that this is essentially a caste system—yet it is an unavoidable point to broach in campaigning for preparedness support. A moral reason to change this status quo does not need to be "fabricated." Any agency founded for the purpose of saving and improving human lives can find rooted in its bedrock ethos and written in its mission documents all it needs to justify a policy for better ensuring the survival of local providers. Perhaps part of the leverage that can be exerted in an incentives campaign is to "increase the discomfort" agencies feel with this ethical situation.

Beyond this there are other levers—tactical remedies that can be offered. An initial step is to level out the inequities by providing counterparts with security training and hardware (radios, vehicles, etc.) equal to what expatriates received before they withdrew. Unfortunately, "equity" alone will not adequately improve the safety of local service providers. After all, if a regimen of training and equipment proves not good enough to keep expatriates from evacuating, then it is not good enough for the locals who are left behind either. We need to modify the aid service delivery vehicle itself.

Obligation to retrofit

In asymmetric situations where our local counterparts face violent spoilers acting on an entirely different ethical and tactical plane, safety comes not just from traditional training and equipment—but also from new field craft and new aid architecture. To the oft-cited "security triangle" of acceptance, protection, and deterrence is added a lower canopy of security referred to as deconstruction (downgrade, downsize, disperse, delegate and dissolve). To the current repertoire of field craft which stress engagement (winning acceptance and consent through principled behavior and skilled negotiation) are added skills of disengagement (adopting a low profile and a posture of selective transparency). Retrofitting our aid delivery vehicle in these ways requires a mindset and skill set that we have only recently begun to embrace.

The aid community is only just beginning to learn about this new security envelope—and much of that learning has been generated by its local staff and partners themselves. CCHW has documented many low profile, selectively transparent, semi-consensual innovations. These enable "a workplace" that is both discreet and mobile when necessary. They are part of the guidance which can provide agencies more confidence and motivation to engage in preparedness support.

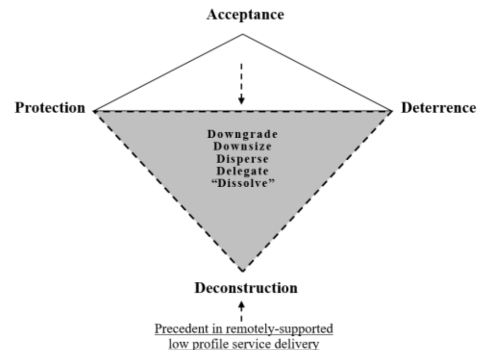


Figure: Security Diamond

We are outsourcing more risk than necessary, but this is rectifiable with more strategic planning. "There is no doubt that there will be future crises where high levels of insecurity will make the deployment of foreign aid workers impossible. But these crises are unlikely to arise without warning, giving time for careful preparation for effective remote delivery."[21]

Forget about "duty of care"— here is the bottom line

If an agency resists this line of persuasion, arguing that what happens to local staff and partners is limited to the contracts they themselves sign, then we must persuade the agency of two things. One is that it was founded for the purpose of serving local populations in need—and local counterparts are certainly of that population. How can it work with them every day but then leave them unprepared for violence?

The other is that a beneficiary populations' fate is tied to the ability of counterparts to continue safe effective service. The less we help local counterparts prepare, the less they can help their compatriots with what will be the biggest killers amid violence: the collapse of life-critical sustenance and services. An agency that does not help retrofit and prepare its local counterparts for service amid violence effectively undermines what may be the last best opportunity to help the populace survive. This goes against an agency's very reason for being.

Do No Harm "2.0" ~
Neither lull nor leave them ill prepared in harm's way

Mary B. Anderson, architect of the Do No Harm movement, said "international practitioners *choose* to become involved in other people's conflicts. Thus we have a special responsibility to avoid making things worse" for the populations we are trying to serve.[22] The movement grew out of the profound failures of the 1990s and this "special responsibility" has become one of the aid industry's core obligations.

There are many pitfalls by which we violate the Do No Harm dictum in our work with locals. The doctrine is well established and need not be reiterated here other than to say that our programs or even mere presence can at times put locals in harm's way. If we are objective enough to reflect on our potential for such culpability, then we might be persuaded to help locals with preparedness support. The Do No Harm dictum may therefore provide leverage in arguing for support of locals' self-protection from violent events that we ourselves might be exacerbating.

Unfortunately there are even deeper violations of the Do No Harm dictum than to put locals in harm's way.

Unfortunately there are even deeper violations of the Do No Harm dictum than to *put* locals in harm's way. CCHW's upgrade of the maxim to *Do No Harm "2.0"* asserts that an agency can "make things worse" for locals in harm's way if it either *lulls* them there or it *leaves* them there ill prepared. One can be considered a failure to ensure their informed consent and the other a case of severe negligence. In order to address this all-too-common risk, a new generation of Do No Harm vigilance is needed.

It is "important to recognize that external agents alter the calculations of local actors" facing civil strife.[23] Agencies may be seen by locals as carrying the mantel or imprimatur of the entire international community. At times, our programs supplant local leadership, our financial largess distorts local economies, and our pronouncements alter local opinion. As Michael Barnett meticulously documents in *Empire of Humanity*, there is frequently a power imbalance between locals and representatives of the aide international.[24]

In the context of this oft-imbalanced relationship, the aid community offers its favored remedies for violence and injustice. It prefers efforts that mobilize civil society on behalf of good governance, rule of law, human rights, social justice, peace building, and conflict prevention. It also promotes early warning, accompaniment, diplomacy, peacekeeping, security sector reform, and more.

As a consequence, locals may think they are being promised solutions and solidarity. This risks prematurely raising expectations and assuaging fears. After all, conflict prevention efforts rarely help locals prepare for a failure to prevent violence. Human rights efforts rarely share tactical skills for living out those rights by outliving killers. And early warning efforts may sound an alarm—but rarely wire warning first to those in harm's way.

We might create a false sense of security, essentially "holding" them in harm's way.

The stakes are high for civilians. Clearly it is not enough to say that local counterparts and communities generally "want" the presence and programs of the aid industry and "willingly" participate. Would it not be natural for endangered populations to be lulled by our reassuring presence and programs? Do we realize how much we might sometimes "tip the scales" in their decision making? We might create a false sense of security and essentially "hold" them in harm's way?

The opportunity cost

As Edward Luttwak bluntly warns, well-intended efforts by outsiders might "inhibit the normal remedy of endangered civilians, which is to escape from the combat zone. Deluded into thinking they will be protected, civilians in danger remain in place until it is too late to flee."[25] In holding sway over local opinions and actions, outsiders can inadvertently impose an "opportunity cost" upon them. This cost is the attention, effort, and precious time given to one course of action as opposed to another.

That which is overlooked and omitted is the opportunity cost.

Mary Anderson claims that external aid has "both a minimalist goal and a maximalist goal." At a minimum, aid "should not cause additional harm." But, her injunction continues, ask "what additional good can be done"[26] Maximalist goals require us to look not just at what is being done but what else *could* be done; not just at acts of commission but of omission as well. That which is omitted is, again, the opportunity cost. How do we try to ensure that we have taken all possible steps to save lives? Do we double down, strengthening our ability to do what we are already trying? Or do we instead look elsewhere for inspiration?

The Brookings' Beth Ferris finds that, "When international agencies leave—as they often do when the situation becomes too dangerous for them—communities are left on their own. That reality is recognized by all the major international actors even though much, and perhaps most, of their work focuses on strengthening their own ability to intervene instead of supporting local communities' self-protection capacities."[27] In terms of listening to and learning from locals, it is an opportunity *lost*. And "as many agencies discovered over the

last decade, sometimes the unintended consequences of their programs were a result of their failure to listen to the people they wanted to help." [28]

Local genius and self-determination

As Fred Cuny once wrote, we view at-risk populations as "making 'rational' choices amongst unsatisfactory options… [We assume they] make choices for some purpose, and we must understand those purposes." Yet he goes on to say, "Indicating that a choice is 'purposeful' or 'rational' does not necessarily mean that it is careful or conscious, that it lists all alternatives and consequences... Many people simplify complex decisions by relying on habit, instinct, simple cues, and trial and error."[29] (He could well have added that they might rely on a trust in outsiders which is later shown to be misplaced.)

Fred Cuny's emphasis on understanding locals' purposes and choices and on considering consequences and alternatives is mirrored in the medical world from which the maxim Do No Harm comes. The core principle of *autonomy* requires respect for the self-determination of those being served. To seek and ensure their *informed consent* is to respect their autonomy and safeguard their capacity for self-determination. An aid agency risks undermining locals' self-determination if it neglects to:

1. discuss with them what consequences might result from a failure of outside protection efforts; and
2. learn about locals' own risk-benefit calculations and protection alternatives, then offer to:
    a. help mitigate any harmful consequences of their coping choices;
    b. support their most viable coping choices; and
    c. share, and support their informed adoption of, self-protection lessons learned elsewhere

Many an agency has worked with local counterparts and communities for long periods before one day being separated from them by violence. Yet despite whatever good it does, an agency distorts its very reason for being if it interrupts civilians' instinct to brace for survival, fails to fully discuss with them potential consequences and alternatives—and then leaves them in harm's way ill prepared. This might not constitute a form of negligence in the legal sense, but it certainly could by the agency's very own core ethical standards.

Core Self-Interest

If in agreement with the following key points, then please skip to "**Peril and Penitence**" on p. 11.

- It is in the profound best interest of development and relief agencies to do whatever they can to salvage and sustain any benefits of their own work with locals that will be impacted by violence.
- Conflict is development in reverse. Preparedness helps partially shock-proof development gains.
- If we are going to lose our humanitarian access, space, and presence—then we can help ensure that local responders have it themselves. By preparing this groundwork, they serve with tolerable safety and effectiveness and we play a remote support role preserving a remarkable continuity of mission.

All providers, whether offering development or humanitarian aid, may encounter violence and no assumption can be made about which type of agency is most apt to face it. In today's many prolonged situations of "no war, no peace," a humanitarian "emergency relief" agency may find itself settled into a fairly safe position of providing maintenance aid for years—while a development agency may find itself increasingly unsettled as benign conditions turn more and more dangerous. The point here is that both can and often do find themselves ill prepared for increased violence.

It is in the profound best interest of these agencies to do whatever they can to *salvage and sustain* any benefits of their work with locals that will be impacted by violence. Though counterintuitive, it is by harnessing the abilities of local communities and local counterparts themselves that our missions may be rescued.

In the best interests of development work

A development agency that anticipates and adapts to growing danger not only stays relevant to the needs of people in harm's way but also helps safeguard years of work. There is no sector of development work that cannot be undone by violence. "One in every three development dollars was lost over the last 30 years due to reverses from conflict or disaster." [30] As is said, "Conflict is development in reverse." How can helping to mitigate such impacts through better preparedness not be a core concern of the development community? (Conflict also forces evermore funding from development aid to humanitarian aid. How can helping reduce that trend not be a core concern of the development community?)

Violence will set progress back—but a foundation of readiness will help buffer both private and public assets.

The USIP's Nancy Lindborg contends that, "We will need to double down on our efforts to shock-proof development."[31] Support of local preparedness can help agencies get development work onto a conflict footing. Violence will set progress back—but a foundation of readiness will somewhat help buffer both private and public assets.

Private property and livelihoods

In regard to private property and livelihoods, families and communities facing violence often find ways to cushion and conserve resources, adapt and substitute livelihoods, or strip and transfer their properties. When all else fails, they may take flight—but it need not reverse all gains made in development. Well-planned flight focuses on getting social units and economic assets out of harm's way. The better preserved these two things remain, then the less severe and lengthy displacement may be.

The ultimate duration of displacement—a grave concern and cost of the international community these days—depends on many factors. But, security allowing, those who have kept their social units and economic assets most intact have a better chance of not being impoverished by displacement; of navigating the costs and demands of returning home; and of rebuilding their lives earlier. For them, a vital portion of past development gains will have been salvaged and actual development can resume sooner. On a prima facie level, this is clearly in the basic self-interest of the development aid community.

Public infrastructure and utilities

In regard to public infrastructure and utilities, locals often try to mitigate damage done to public assets. They also create "workarounds" that substitute for and temporarily offset the damage or disruption that does occur. Efforts to relocate and hide necessities ranging from pumps and generators up to entire factories or services, and to stockpile spare parts and exhaustible resources, all lessen the initial losses of vital infrastructure to bombardment or looting. Subsequent to that locals may, as the ample history of wartime undergrounds and shadow governments show, keep public works and workers functioning to a degree.

The sectors of transportation, energy (electricity and fuel), water, sanitation, health, telecommunications, education, banking and finance, markets, and more all require skilled workers. Conflict often reduces their number because many leave (the 'brain drain') and fewer come in (since technical schooling and placement is disrupted) to the skilled workforce. Yet often, non-formal training and certification of professionals continues discreetly. At the same time, entrepreneurs or even cottage industries spring up to establish stopgap measures in all these vital service areas. And all the while, everyday civilians devise and disseminate—on a massive scale—methods of working around or substituting for gaps in public service. They are all classic examples of the adage: "Nothing works, but everything is possible."

Locals try to salvage and sustain utilities and services thus preserving some facets of development.

There are limits to mitigation in the face of armed conflict, thus the result is more apt to be "shock resistant" than "shock proof." There are also limits to "workarounds" that may prove to be suboptimal, unsustainable, or even detrimental. Regardless, locals in most conflicts try to salvage and sustain (if even just in the short term) utilities and services for sake of public welfare. In this way, some facets of development are preserved. And new ones are created: small-scale income is generated (water 'taxi' transport, garbage removal teams, telecom

kiosks, etc); innovation is spurred (a great many in the area of alternative energy alone); and "appropriate technology" (which stresses self-reliance, accessibility, affordability, and adaptability to community and changing contexts) is bolstered.

All of these actions can be incubated or supported by outsiders. The basic goals of "shock resistance" are to preserve what one can and be positioned for faster rehabilitation when conditions finally allow for peace and reconstruction. Although violent conflict inflicts a net decline of public infrastructure and utilities, these efforts keep many more assets and modified services in play than would be the case otherwise. And this too is in the profound self-interest of the development aid community.

In the best interests of humanitarian work

Fundamental humanitarian access, space, and presence

If the CEOs of every emergency relief agency were asked which is most essential: *who* gets humanitarian action done, or simply that it get done—they all would state the latter. This leads to one of the great puzzles *and* opportunities of humanitarian aid work. Those very same CEOs might also argue that their right to humanitarian access, humanitarian space, and humanitarian presence is essential to humanitarian action itself. That is, humanitarian action *is theirs*. This is not a rhetorical flourish: it adamantly defines *who* does humanitarian work. "Underpinning the logic of institutional preservation is the aid community's ingrained belief that humanitarian action is indispensable to the survival of [conflict's victims]… This remains the axiomatic starting point for humanitarian action."[32] This conflates lifesaving work with the modern humanitarian enterprise: that is, with *us*.

The reality is that much of what civilians in harm's way do (and have done for millennia) is "indispensable to their survival" and can easily be called humanitarian action. Humanitarian "access" can be seen as our own unfettered ability to move, reach, and serve them—or as *their* ability to acquire or devise what they need. Humanitarian "space" can be seen as a physical reference to our workspace and a functional reference to our ability to work unhindered—or to *their* ability (not at all dependent upon a demarcated inviolable 'space') to help each other in safe and effective enough fashion. Humanitarian "presence" can be seen as our being there—or simply the existence of lifesaving action: *by them*.

Much of what civilians in harm's way do actually ***is*** *humanitarian action.*

For many years the humanitarian aid community has expended great amounts of advocacy and negotiation on these questions of access, space, and presence. The concern is that each of these is under grave threat—and thus the entire enterprise faces an existential threat. Yet this threat presents an *opportunity* for incentivizing the humanitarian community to offer local preparedness support. Such support will help preserve humanitarian access, humanitarian space, and humanitarian presence *by locals*. This is the case whether they be local counterparts or local communities—they are all involved in humanitarian action.

So again, which is most essential: *who* gets humanitarian action done, or simply that it get done? The strong tendency has been for aid agencies to relinquish center stage only after their backs are to the wall; when it's clear that danger may force them to work remotely.

Remote management—the practice of removing expatriate workers to safer locations and having local counterparts bear the full responsibility and risk of aid delivery—has been experimented with for years and likely saved a great many lives. Nevertheless, numerous reports continue to find that our planning for "post-access" strategies like this is too often thin or even absent. It is still commonly found to be ad hoc and belated. Thus it is in the profound interests of humanitarian work that this transition be given more strategic thought. One place to begin is to revisit what humanitarian access, space, and presence really mean.

Fundamental safety and effectiveness in worst case scenarios

A humanitarian agency's concern for safe and effective delivery is never more profound than when danger is at its peak. But an agency that adjusts the architecture and field craft of aid delivery amid growing violence can help its local counterparts serve more safely and effectively as its expatriates pull back. Local counterparts

who are going to face violence alone must be safe before they can serve. And they will be safer if certain adjustments in the "architecture" and "field craft" of aid delivery have been made. Such retrofitting, cited above, is further detailed in the Center's report, "Why Should We Help Locals Brace for Violence?"

In regard to the profile or *architecture* of the aid vehicle, a fresh and flexible mindset is needed. Facilitation modules can cover tactics like how to downgrade identity; downsize infrastructure; disperse, monetize, or outsource supplies; disperse staff; disperse beneficiaries; and delegate work. These steps "deconstruct" aid institutions so they are less of a target. It may entail flattening hierarchies and moving from static platforms to mobile networks. In place of echeloned organization flowcharts and office trappings might be rudimentary and devolved structures with decision-making pushed to the ground. Some describe it as work while "dissolving" into society. Working while "cut off" is natural under this architecture.

Local counterparts will be safer and more effective if we adjust the architecture and field craft of aid delivery.

In regard to *field craft*, facilitation modules could cover skill sets such as humanitarian intelligence, communications, safe movement, and threat response. More than the skill sets so-named today, the preparations envisioned here would pertain to more asymmetric, less permissive conditions. (As but one example: beyond today's road security courses in route planning, pairing up, defensive driving, and radio checks—preparedness support could also broach topics like dispersed privatized motor pools; off-road, nighttime, and non-mechanized movement; and nonlethal tactics to decoy, divert or delay hostile pursuit.)

Most UN and NGO relief agencies have found it necessary at times to adopt discreet profiles, defensive deception, and selective transparency. We tend to rigidly view these compromises as "exceptions to the rule" and do not easily internalize or share them. These exceptions were driven by crises, *not* by doctrine or tactical skill—and that is the recipe for continued ad-hoc and amateur efforts.

Adjustments in the architecture and field craft of aid benefit not only the security of local counterparts, but their freedom of movement as well. That, in turn, enhances the quality and effectiveness of the aid. With a strengthened ability to communicate and move with more discretion and less hindrance, local counterparts will establish and sustain better community relationships. This improves the acceptance and targeting of aid. That is to say, agencies do not need overt visibility in order to establish an effective presence among the population.

This same operational freedom helps local providers navigate the powers that be. Selectively they deal with trustable actors—but avoid criminal or violent spoilers who have forfeited any claim to be dealt with as a legitimate authority.[33] "Active presence does not necessarily mean a large footprint or presenting an attractive target… [Moreover,] presence without armed protection is possible... for organizations that have a small footprint."[34]

Revamped local providers will find they can: better assess security; discreetly reach and win acceptance from communities; navigate friends and foes; deliver aid based on need rather than extortion; monitor and evaluate goods or services with less interference; and more. In doing this they will stand even more accountable to beneficiaries, parent agencies, and donors. And with this improved ability to deliver on commitments comes a virtuous circle: operational freedom that nurtures ties of acceptance *improves delivery*—and improved delivery further strengthens acceptance.[35]

Well before reaching a threshold of violence which forces expatriates to withdraw, an ever-increasing amount of daily operational control can be devolved to local counterparts. And preparedness discussion can focus on future aspects of the remote interface, should they become necessary. They could include plans for distance consultation, distance resourcing, distance monitoring and evaluation, distance humanitarian intelligence, and more.

This offers a continuity of mission such as agencies have never achieved before.

Agencies will experience less disruption to their mandate because they have more systematically helped brace their local counterparts for violence. There is no more existential purpose than this. The stronger the remote relationship during the months or even years of separation ahead—the more "intactness" that is sustained—then the better will expatriates someday to hit the ground running upon rejoining the local counterparts they once had to leave behind. This represents a continuity of mission such as agencies have never achieved before.

Peril and Penitence

If in agreement with the following key points, then please skip to "**GUIDANCE**" on p. 13.

- We often wait to innovate until facing exceptional threats. Yet afterward we then tend to distance ourselves from the innovation as an "exception to the rule" and fail to systematize its lessons.
- We are often moved to innovate by feeling penitent at our failure to avert the deaths of civilians. But it is usually an inward-looking remorse that focuses on our own performance more than the abilities of such civilians.
- It is utterly un-strategic to have risk or regret be drivers of innovation. Agencies should focus on what can be done to prepare *now*.

Alarm

History has repeatedly shown that nothing motivates innovation by the aid agencies and donors quite like risk. There have been many times when the number and nature of deaths breaches our collective conscience. At such moments, the industry was unusually willing to reassess its most fundamental meaning and operational modalities. It was at such points when aid providers discreetly initiated night flights into Biafra, "Operation Lifeline" into Sudan, backpack medics into Burma, underground railroads into (and out of) North Korea, a "Land Bridge" into Cambodia, the "Emergency Relief Desk" into Eritrea, the "International Defense and Aid Fund" into Apartheid South Africa, and innumerable other secretive unorthodox programs that either allied with opposition groups or crossed borders without consent.

It is utterly un-strategic to have risk or regret still be such drivers of innovation.

These were times of "existential crisis" when we felt we must do something radical in order to fulfill our very reason for being. Indeed these were even times when agencies *came into* being. Some of today's premier aid agencies were born in defiance of dictators or to the disapproval of reputable organizations and their own home governments. Both *Save the Children* and *Oxfam* were born, two wars apart, as efforts to reduce the starvation caused by its own government's blockades. The precursor of the US-based *International Rescue Committee* began as a secretive effort to help individuals fleeing Nazi-occupied countries at a time when the US government resisted taking in refugees. *Médecins sans Frontiérs'* genesis came in rebuke to states' (and the ICRC's) unwillingness to confront national sovereignty in cases of mass atrocity.

The births of these organizations were high watermarks of initiative and innovation by aid providers; times of blockades and breakthroughs. It does raise the question as to what happens to "radicals gone professional." That is, how does an institution keep that unique time of imagination and conviction alive; how does it sustain an appropriate sense of alarm and, if necessary, unorthodoxy?

Atonement

Remorse also spurs action. According to Michael Barnett, "the international community has tended to rally around humanitarianism at precisely the moment that its humanity is most suspect."[36] In the parallel world of human rights, Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier once remarked, "reference to law is always strongest at precisely those moments when respect for the rules disappears."[37]

Across aid service and human rights, politics and diplomacy, failure moves us.

Almost one hundred years ago the League of Nations was "born of the destruction and disillusionment arising from World War One."[38] It was seen as a "radical departure"

from old diplomacy"[39] and the "epitome of a new world order."[40] Then nearly seventy years ago the Genocide Convention was called a "revolutionary" development. It arose in the aftermath of the Holocaust and made "Never again" a byword for international conscience.

Forty-five years ago in the wake of the Biafran crisis a "small revolution" was born to humanitarianism.[41] Médecins sans Frontiérs formed to push the boundaries of aid work and literally overstep sovereign state borders. Their "so-called 'rebellious humanitarianism' insisted that agencies have a responsibility and a capacity to influence… the context in which they operate."[42]

Then a dozen years ago, following a decade that witnessed unimpeded crimes against humanity in Rwanda and Srebrenica, new movements arose intended to better ensure the prevention of or response to mass atrocities. In these movements one Genocide Prevention Task Force cited what it (and many others) saw as a "revolution in conscience." [43] One movement was the "Responsibility to Protect" and the other was "Do No Harm."

The living were atoning for their sins and trying to keep the dead among the living.

"After only a few years were the bystanders made to answer for their lack of action…. Memories of Rwanda are widely credited with having motivated the eventual principle of a "Responsibility to Protect. The living were atoning for their sins and trying to keep the dead among the living. The aid community proved more willing to look critically at itself and the result was a sustained reform movement." It was the "Do No Harm" movement… and it "reframed the terms of the debate." [44]

§ § §

Needing to be the rescuer

Peril and penitence have proven to be powerful levers for international humanitarian action and invention. A few observations follow from this. If we interpret events in a deeply egocentric way—such as feeling profound guilt at not preventing deaths—this might cause us to invest *ourselves* even more deeply. While this emotional lever moves us not to be "bystanders," it also may prevent us from seeing solutions in which we ourselves do not need to stand center stage.

After all, we are not the only ones who live with regret. Ask widows, orphans, even the "ghosts" of atrocities: "If you could go back in time, would you do anything differently?" None will reply "No. Nothing." It is in the reply "Yes" that we can learn from them. Atonement is belated, but it can be a force for breakthrough change, especially if we know where to look and who to ask.

If atonement is all about us, then it might not lead to real innovation.

MSF's Marc du Bois once said, "It is not the lack of protection [by us], it is the surplus of violence that [is] the primary problem. The humanitarian obsession with protection reflects the degree to which we define the external environment through our own activities. A sort of self-flagellation in the humanitarian community over the horrible deaths and destruction of our beneficiaries has shifted the spotlight away from the violence and its perpetrators… Its logic pushes our gaze inward." To that conclusion du Bois might well have added, it also shifts attention away from how civilians try to protect themselves. Whether our "revolutions" are simply turns of the wheel back to the original starting point or actually mark steady progress, they seem to leave us doubling down on a script in which *we* hold the spotlight, relegating to the shadowy wings the locals who often are the real heroes of the story.

Willfully forgetting

An even more basic observation would be just *how very un-strategic it is* to have risk or regret still be such drivers of innovation. Why wait, in Barnett's words, for "crises of faith" to effect needed change? [45] Agency CEOs need to be constructively engaged with the questions: Are your current programs ready for violence and a loss of access? If not, why not? Are your local counterparts and communities ready? If not, why not? Likely few agencies can answer "Yes" to those questions.

The industry's self-image is deeply engrained—perhaps more than historical record itself. Too often it is an image without reflection. The historical record shows that when our backs were to the wall we have at times worked around the problems of violence and access. UN and mainstream NGOs weighed their principles and imperatives, and frequently the result was less-than-consensual or transparent locally-led work. Importantly, those efforts often saved lives precisely because they adopted low-profile tactics with locals in the lead.

But as it turns out, that approach does not fit aid work's indelible iconography in which we are the rescuers doing indispensable work that need not be largely handed off to others. It is work of self-evident good that need not be hidden from the sunlight. The various occasions when we have in fact worked in the twilight have been excused as "extraordinary" and "temporary" measures. As noted, past "exceptions to the rule" were compelled by crises, *not* doctrine or tactical skill—and that has been the recipe for continued ad-hoc and amateur efforts.

Unorthodox methods need to be systematized somewhere if they are to be done competently.

This is because our lessons learned outside the box tend to be put back inside the box and shelved. Various reports over time indicate that we commonly fail to share or even internalize our unorthodoxies. It almost amounts to willfully forgetting: a tendency to suppress learning in the industry about best practices for discreet aid and protection.[46] They remain one-time aberrations—until the next time they are needed. But how often does the "unconventional" need to be repeated before it stops being an anomaly and is deemed a part of viable repertoire?

Amid peril we have acute insight as to the things that can be done, and amid penitence we have acute hindsight as to the things left undone. What is lacking in each instance is strategic foresight. Unorthodox methods need to be systematized somewhere if they are ever to be done competently

GUIDANCE

Paradigm

As noted earlier, many renowned individuals and institutions have urged the aid community to better support local capacity for self-preservation before they lose access to them. Some today might cite a growing amount of protection guidance in the aid world as evidence that this call is being answered. The fact is, however, that perhaps 99% of the international community's protection portfolio is *not* premised on a need for locals to protect themselves alone amid unstoppable violence.

Today's protection paradigms are not premised on locals protecting themselves alone amid unstoppable violence.

Even among efforts described as supporting "community-based protection" and "self-protection," misnomers abound: it is easy to demonstrate that many such efforts are run neither *in* communities nor ultimately *by* locals alone. Some of the efforts which remain are indeed designed for genuine community self-protection. They provide useful precedents, especially in terms of the mindsets and skill sets employed. Yet to date, they have been of very limited scope and scale. They offer only fragmented pieces (most popularly—watch groups, quick alerts, run bags, search and rescue) of what is possible.

Agencies (and donors) deserve more guidance on more options, especially in worst-case scenarios. Again, there are many who sense that helping civilians brace for what may be unstoppable violence is an idea whose time has come. But in too many panels and publications the idea is broached—and then left hanging. Its advocates have lacked fleshed-out explanations of how to operationalize it so that they and their audience can wrap their heads around and run with it.

The onus has been on advocates of this nascent paradigm to offer concrete and comprehensive scaffolding. This then is the "value added" of the preparedness support paradigm. It is unique in the milieu of protection work. CCHW offers such a framework; a process with full-spectrum wrap-around support. Even just the existence of pragmatic guidance on preparedness might the spur much-needed incentive to move forward with concrete policy and practice.

A few critical things to know

Planning for our collapse

The paradigm "shift" that sets preparedness support apart is its core premise: We must program for collapse. It is not enough to "integrate or mainstream" protection into aid's daily work if one day that work is going to disintegrate midstream amid unstoppable violence. Nor is it enough to have suspension and evacuation plans. Program cycles must add an "off-ramp" for our departure so that they might continue, post-presence. In order to achieve such continuity, agencies need standards for the most "nonstandard" of all events: collapse.

The paradigm "shift" that sets preparedness support apart: We must program for collapse.

Yes, there needs to be standards even for—especially for—failed situations. These are the moments when service providers most need guidance. Preparedness support is intended to help brace locals' own capacity for self-preservation before we ourselves are incapacitated. It should motivate agencies to realize that even in the worst scenarios they may be able to snatch more victory from the jaws of defeat than they thought possible.

Connecting silos: staff security and civilian protection

To the extent that strategic thought is given to the possibility of collapse it has typically focused, as noted, on expatriate evacuation; stewardship of programs and properties by local counterparts; local staff security; and lastly local partner security. But where is the programmatic connection to helping prepare and safeguard those we went there to serve in the first place—the populace?

We put local providers' security in one silo and local populations' protection in another.

Too often our view of local self-preservation has been fatefully truncated. We put security of local providers in one silo and protection of local populations in another. But amid growing violence, our local counterparts must be able to survive alone if they are to continue to serve. Early planning to help local staff and partners remain formally or informally operational after we have gone should become a pillar of civilian self-protection. These counterparts will often be the last ones available to help local leaders brace their people for the impacts of violence.

The indivisibility of protection threats

There is far more to civilian survival amid violence than *safety*. Most deaths of civilians in conflict are caused by the conflict-induced collapse of life-critical *sustenance* and *services* rather than by direct contact with armed groups. Studies often show noncombat versus combat deaths to be near a 9:1 ratio. This is particularly true of protracted conflicts that steadily degrade people's social units, resources, and coping abilities. Also, these three braids are often intertwined. Locals make risk-benefit calculations that jeopardize their safety in order to reduce hunger or disease-related mortality from a loss of food security or medicines or providers. (For such reasons, locals split up their families; leave hiding and expose themselves; engage in dangerous illicit activities; pay soldiers bribes to let them move to farm or market; and more.)

We need to see the "indivisibility" of protection as locals do and help them prepare for all mortal threats. It was during Bosnia that the phrase the "well-fed dead" was coined. The point was that it is not enough to provide *sustenance* and *services*—efforts to address *safety* are needed too. Yet the converse is equally true. Civilians who avoid being harmed by violence only to die from the hunger or disease driven by conflict are the "unharmed dead." We cannot claim to have helped locals lay groundwork for "self-protection" if preparing for threats which may kill

Civilians who avoid being harmed by violence only to die from the hunger or disease are the "unharmed dead."

nine-tenths of them are not part of the equation. CCHW keeps a running inventory of such survival practices across these three braids of survival.

Policy

Commitment and trigger

Preparedness support is a sensitive endeavor. To be effective, it must be initiated well before the thresholds of violence that typically spur agencies into belated action. Preparedness also affects relationships: headquarters (board, leadership, staff) must be on the same script as the field, and in the field a substantial amount of decision-making must start devolving toward local counterparts. For these reasons, the force of policy is needed in order to both motivate and guide. A robust policy would clearly state an agency's commitments, its approach to attaining those commitments, and the red-lines which trigger preparedness action with its local counterparts and communities. In sum: without policy commitment and clarity, an agency's incentive for preparedness support risks being more aspirational than actionable.

Without firm policy, the incentive for preparedness support may stay more aspirational than actionable.

CCHW can assist with policy formulation through in-house stocktaking (√ surveying HQ and field views of self-protection and √ vetting foundational documents and security policies for any inferences about a "duty of care" or obligation to "do no harm;" simulations; policy workshops; "policy pledges" with fellow agencies; and donor groundwork (the latter two steps aiming to attract funds).

Process

Any paradigm or policy obviously needs to be backed with a viable process. CCHW offers full-spectrum or "wrap-around" guidance for agencies wanting to support local self-protection. Stepping stones for the preparedness support process are detailed on the CCHW website. A summary and diagram are provided below. As indicated, each step can be supported by CCHW tools or services.

In brief, when red-line dangers emerge in the field, subsequent steps are triggered: *Consult* with counterparts about their future security. Jointly *assess*. Jointly agree preparations are needed? If yes, then *recruit* local and expatriate facilitators. Assemble message *modules*. Take steps to *implement*. If expatriates must pull back, then a period of *remote support* ensues. Subsequent *return* of expatriates. *Evaluate* and *learn*.

Message modules.

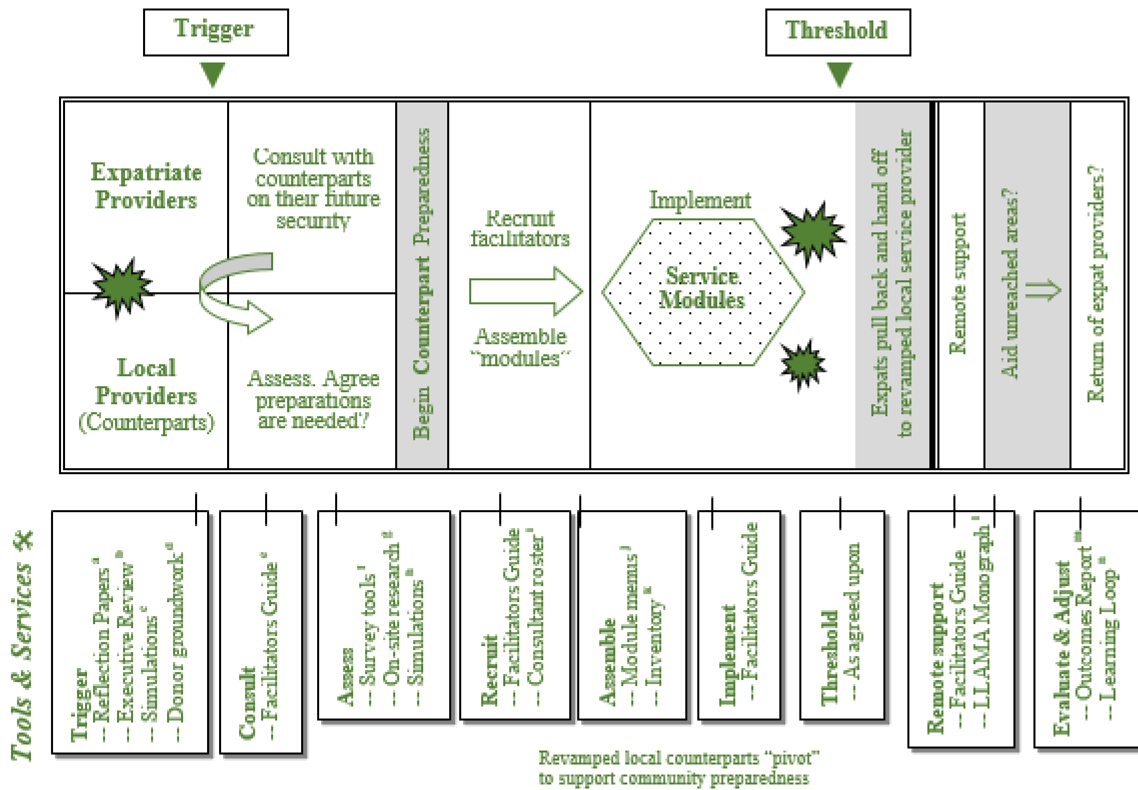
Three essentials of preparedness are information, leadership, and mobilization. Preparedness support conveys information through messaging *modules*. They can provide a wide range of news; deliver security updates and perhaps dispel rumors; identify vital resources and opportunities; or provide menus of survival strategies and tactics. The information might come from local counterparts or communities—or be identified elsewhere. It might even come from lessons learned in other conflicts across countries and cultures: we have to date largely neglected our ability to facilitate such a South-South transfer of information.

Survival has a lethal learning curve that can be cut shorter by amplified and replicated information sharing. In sourcing that information we need to be discerning about those we elevate to the status of "protection expert." In our pantheon of "vulnerable groups" there are for example elders, displaced persons, and demobilized youth —all with life-critical knowledge about navigating violence. As rhetorically stated earlier: Ask widows, orphans, even the "ghosts" of atrocities: "If you could go back in time, would you do anything differently?" None will reply "No. Nothing." It is in the reply "Yes" that we can learn from them.

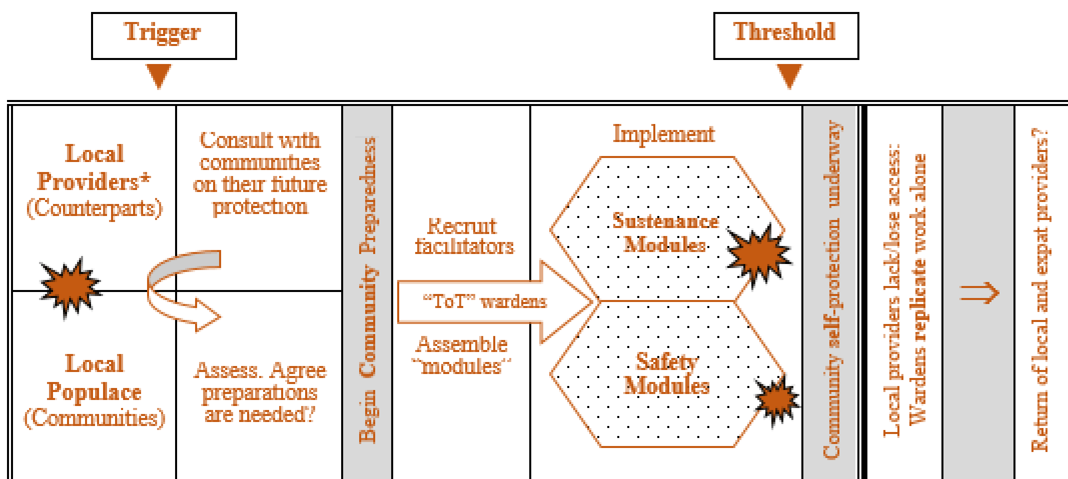
CCHW has begun to glean from survivor accounts such learning and place it into optional module menus. The purpose is to get their hard-won experiences (one could say "best practices") centralized—not standardized— and available for sharing. There are too many diverse situations for such modules to ever to be prescriptive. But they can at least give local leaders, facilitators and wardens a lot to consider. As is noted later, many

strategies and tactics may be supportable through micro-granting, and experiments in support of protection messaging and mobilizing have shown remarkable capacity for reach and replication.

Counterpart Preparedness — Local Staff & Partner Security:
Duty of Care



Community Preparedness — Civilian Self-Protection:
Do No Harm "2.0"



* **Expatriate** providers may have backstage catalytic role as long as conditions allow

The Counterpart Preparedness steps help prepare an agency's local staff and partners brace for serving alone with perhaps a modicum of distance support. A sampling of *service-related* modules might include:

~ Remote support (A): Continuity of service: distance consulting, resourcing, monitoring and intelligence (news & warning)
~ Physical safety for local service providers ("field craft")
~ Deconstruction of aid institutions ("architecture")
~ Adjusting the mission: Support for civilian self-protection
~ Remote support (B): Expansion of service area (teams recruited, trained and supplied to work in "unreachable" areas)

Revamped local counterparts then pivot to help communities prepare.

During their preparations, local counterparts not only continue the mandated aid and service but also must "pivot" to support beneficiary communities with their own preparedness. That is to say, our local staff and partners are not only recipients of preparedness support but also become providers of it. Security conditions dictate when that pivots happens and whether or not expatriates will still be present on the ground to provide direct help.

The subsequent (if not concurrent) Community Preparedness steps unfold in a fairly similar process—now led by local counterparts—of consult, assess, recruit, assemble and implement modules, and evaluate. This time the modules relate to civilian *safety* and *sustenance*. A key addition here is the inclusion of *wardens* who receive training-of-trainer type support. They are a linchpin both for sustaining readiness in their community as well as helping spread preparedness messaging to other communities. Such grassroots nodes are needed because even local providers will face limitations of access and reach.

Pilot

Lastly, "nothing succeeds like success." Strong early piloting of preparedness support can help incentivize the aid industry at large. Moreover, evaluations from those early pilots will offer a feedback loop that refines and improves guidance. Pilots and refinements will build momentum for this kind of work.

Having said that, it is important to remember that there *already is precedent* for the "pieces and moving parts" of preparedness support. History shows that civilians, local providers, and their international partners have already "piloted" many preparedness practices over the years, often out of the limelight. In most crises of any length they create strategies and structures for survival. For obvious reasons, locals have not had the luxury of chronicling their methods. Nor, as noted above, have internationals been inclined to share details about their forays into the unorthodox.

Yet until pilots of the full preparedness support process have been undertaken, such precedents (which CCHW continually records) should be cited as part of a campaign of influence. This is about persuading not proving. Any agency that truly wants to be part of an innovation will not, by definition, wait for others to fully pilot it first. And any populace that is truly in peril will not want us to wait and make the perfect the enemy of the good. To paraphrase T. E. Lawrence, it is their war and you are there to help them, not to win it for them. Better that they do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly.[47]

Better that they do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly.
—T. E. Lawrence

INDUCEMENTS

Patronage

Patrons—both organized donors and the giving public—provide powerful incentives to the aid community. These include incentives to enter a conflict zone—or not. And incentives to innovate—or not. But agencies are not passive in the patronage relationship. They have the ability (and as the great aid innovator Fred Cuny used to argue, the *obligation*) to incentivize patrons in certain directions too.

Pitch to Donors

It is not controversial to note that aid agencies pay attention to money. In a very competitive industry, each agency needs to make the most compelling case possible to donors. As is detailed in a forthcoming CCHW Brief, a preparedness support approach has several traits that should appeal to donors. Here are some pitches.

Donors deserve more choices

As humanitarian access grows ever more difficult, donors are increasingly in need of creative modalities in support of aid and protection. Of all possible protections, the ones that bolster local capacity (for attaining physical safety and life-critical sustenance and services) amid violence will be the last ones standing because they support the abilities of the very people who are left standing alone as violence shuts the world out. As noted above, many of the best and brightest in the aid world have already urged this choice, arguing that providers should support local initiatives for self-preservation before they lose access to them.

To a degree, donors have been among those urging such support. For example, signatories to the 2003 Stockholm principles on "good humanitarian donorship" emphasized the importance of strengthening local preparedness for man-made crises.[48] More recently, the European Community Humanitarian Office concluded that community "self-protection must be at the heart of protection strategies."[49] And as part of a "Grand Bargain" at the 2015 World Humanitarian Summit, the commitment was made to drastically increase localized funding from 0.4% to 25% by 2020. As the Secretariat of the Summit reported, "One call has arisen more than any other: recognize that affected people are the central actors in their own survival… Humanitarian preparedness must be reoriented to support local coping strategies… support individual and community-based self-protection…. ."[50]

To a degree, donors have been urging support of locally led protection strategies.

The repertoire for aiding and protecting civilians *ourselves* is limited and grows smaller as violence increases. Donors become stuck doubling down on broadly the same methods. Given this backdrop, a funding advantage might accrue to aid agencies that have made policy commitments to, and absorbed guidance for, conducting preparedness support. It will distinguish them among donors in need of more choices.

Donors deserve more cost-effective options

√ An ounce of prevention:

Nothing is a better cost saver than preparedness. Obviously it reduces the extent of death and destruction. But less appreciated is the fact that it *also* helps limit the depth and duration of displacement. When locals plan and execute their own displacement, they do so to preserve their social units and economic assets as best they can. Prolonged displacements are an ever-increasing drain on aid budgets. Thus any strategies that help locals keep their human and financial capital more intact amid violence will help alleviate those downstream costs. Being more active "wardens" of their own self-displacement they are less likely to become the abject (and expensive) wards of others. As the remarkable Fred Cuny once advised, "It should be remembered that any preparedness activity, no matter how small, can have significant results."[51] The related field of disaster risk reduction has proven that it is far cheaper to help limit breakage than pick up the pieces. An ounce of prevention is indeed worth a pound of cure.

And to coin an old Pepsi advertisement, donors get even "more bounce to the ounce" because strategies of avoidance *also* pull fuel from the path of conflict. As a CCHW Briefing on conflict management notes, the more prepared that locals' social units and economic assets are for violence, the less fuel and fodder there will be to feed that violence. Much of what is called "conflict" today actually targets noncombatants and their resources. The explicit targets are the communities' fungible assets and fighting bodies; materiel and manpower; contraband and conscripts. Their exposed assets are its fuel, their residents are its fodder (for conscription, taxation, servitude, reward rape and more). People and property alike are sucked into

Communities might be unable to avoid the firestorm, but they can lower their own BTU rating.

the firestorm. But through preparedness, they can limit opportunities for the requisitioning of supplies and recruitment of soldiers on which conflicts gorge and thrive.

Conflict's combustibility may be compared to a British thermal unit, the measure of heat given off when fuel is burned for heating. Communities might ultimately be unable to prevent conflict or accommodate abusers—but they can do something about their own BTU rating. They can deprive violence of some strength and cause it to burn less intensely. This pitch should appeal to donors, especially considering the fact (noted next) that conventional aid too often has the opposite effect—of putting more fuel in conflict's path and increasing its combustibility. It is a significant fringe benefit to offer donors a mode of operations that acts as a retardant to conflict rather than an accelerant.

√ Evade the extortion business:
The aid enterprise pays a very high price for its mostly transparent and consensual posture toward parties to a conflict. As has been well-documented over the years, the industry has lost billions of dollars to forced currency transactions, lavish airport and seaport fees, extortive "taxes" for access, rental and purchase rate gouging, "protection" rackets, ghost contracts, looting on a grand scale, and more.

In conflict zones, Cadillac Aid is simply an irresistible target. It often becomes a military objective or a bandit's spoils. It can subsidize a war economy. Modern camps are often "opportunity structures" for belligerents and criminals. Frequently, they are undefended repositories of resources (food, supplies, vehicles, coercible labor) that competing powers almost have no choice but to battle for control over, becoming politicized and militarized in the process. Aid's entire presence, from its Land Cruisers to its negotiations, can become a symbiotic part of the battle.

Preparedness can help reduce the extortive costs of doing business that are passed on to donors.

Despite voluminous guidance on principled negotiation, local acceptance, and security, big operations still tend to hemorrhage money. Setting aside the fact that much of this spillage goes to abusive state powers, dangerous profiteers and thug soldiers, it is a hugely wasteful "cost of doing business" that is passed on to donors. Agencies often do belatedly shift their profile, becoming less transparent and consensual with extortive and violent actors. By contrast, once it is triggered preparedness support adopts an architecture and field craft that enables providers to be *selectively* transparent and consensual so as to avoid many such predatory costs.

√ The "other" efficiency ratio:
A great amount of weight is given that ubiquitous "pie chart" depicting how much of an agency's funding goes straight to programs in the field as opposed to supporting services. Whether or not an anorexic "overhead" is even good for the health of an organization, the direct-to-indirect ratio has become shorthand for "efficient" and even ethical work. There is unrelenting pressure to show that one's indirect spending is bare bones.

Perhaps an agency that demonstrates it is also economizing on direct spending for programs in the field can win some relief from that pressure? This may require efforts to elevate a second pie chart—this on field program spending—to equal prominence. These direct field costs (for personnel, transport, office, materiel, supplies, security, construction, sub-grants, etc.) are not overhead—but they are overfed. For the efficiency ratio suggested here, the question goes beyond whether an agency is making frugal bids, hires and purchases in the field. It goes to the very design of its aid delivery architecture in an increasingly violence environment.

Cadillac aid seems to treat "tonnage delivered" as a validating metric of commitment and accomplishment. Agencies excel at building remarkable logistical tails of cargo containers, convoys and camps. They prize the surge power and throw weight of materiel commodities. This capacity is ever more effective—and expensive. Yet, as Thomas Weiss once observed, "When salaries, transportation, equipment, housing, insurance, and security rival [in cost] the aid delivered… the humanitarian enterprise tarnishes its reputation."[52] In contrast, preparedness support (which aims to complement that enterprise, not "substitute" for it) has a far less expensive architecture. This is just a fortunate coincidence because the main purpose of its architecture is to help local providers to operate more safely and effectively amid violence. As noted above,

These steps “deconstruct” aid institutions so they are less of a target. It may entail flattening hierarchies and moving from static platforms to mobile networks. In place of echeloned organization flowcharts and office trappings might be more rudimentary and devolved structures with decision-making pushed to the ground. Our revamped counterparts tread lightly and leave a very small footprint. Some describe it as work while “dissolving” into society.

Discreet service delivery has a lighter, more agile footprint with a much lower “overhead.”

For simple reasons of safety and more operational freedom, preparedness support “de-institutionalizes” (retrofits) the aid delivery vehicle. It downsizes and disperses into discreet operations. It eschews the most expensive line items of aid work, leverages local resources and volunteer manpower, facilitates informal remittances to support indigenous services, and more. Such changes could be depicted in the “new pie chart.” On one hand there would be will be several line items either reduced or dropped. On the other, there would be a couple new ones. These expenses, cited in CCHW literature, would be the comparatively minor expenses (facilitator and warden stipends and various possible micro-grants) used to kick start community readiness.

√ The low cost of community readiness:
What does it cost to help ready a community for emergencies? The three “commodities” most associated with preparedness—information, leadership and mobilization—happen to be comparatively affordable. Kofi Annan (and others) has said, “Information on conflicts… can be as vital a requirement for distressed populations in areas of violent upheaval as shelter, food, water and medical services.”[53]

While development agencies have long facilitated a transfer of information for a variety of sectors and for community development writ large, humanitarian agencies typically stress “delivering the goods.” It is the iconic image of those goods—weighty pallets piled with emergency relief—which we have been conditioned to see. Donors have moved somewhat away from this model, allowing bulk commodities to be monetized and now sometimes substituting them with cash transfers.

The “commodities” most linked to preparedness are information, leadership and mobilization.

But perhaps more credence should be given to maxims touting the “substitution of information for mass.” Thomas L. Friedman once noted the “engrained notion” that “weight equals value”. He added that now, however, “knowledge and information are increasingly substituted for bulk weight in the creation of economic value… Trends have focused on downsized, smaller, less palpable evidence of output.”[54] The same maxim is heard in the military sphere. This is extremely relevant to emergency aid and protection. Pieces of information—whether early warning, the location of life-critical sustenance, or detail about survival tactics—can indeed be lifesaving. Showing “palpable evidence” of that is the purpose of the latitudinal and longitudinal evaluation tools to be offered by CCHW.

Aid agencies have significant capacity to be a conduit of life-critical information for people in harm’s way. But there is even more potential here waiting to be harnessed. Humanitarian agencies, local media and local journalists still “frequently know very little about each other… Often agencies do not approach local media to seek out collaboration.”[55] Fortunately, preparedness support aims to leverage all such useful local capacities. This would greatly help amplify information sharing and facilitate mobilization. Such a multiplier can reduce the already low cost of readiness.

Donors deserve more scalable and sustainable programs

Rudimentary models of protection messaging done in Sudan and elsewhere have already demonstrated the exponential reach and self-replication that is possible in preparedness work. Outsiders built on the existing scaffold of local leadership for planning and implementation, and this unsurprisingly was a vital multiplier. They did not invent and import methods of protection. Rather, they began with a genuine, mutual sharing of protection experience and ideas to glean the most useful practices. They formed mobile teams and deployed them with micro-grant support. Those teams met—then exceeded—their hoped for reach: spin-off teams of facilitators independently conducted a *second* generation of dissemination. Then *third*-generation messaging

spontaneously occurred through word of mouth. The experiments were reported to have reached many tens of thousands with protection messaging at a rate of about $1 per person.[56] Any serious effort to help locals survive alone amid atrocities should prioritize such economy and scalability.

Second and third generation dissemination then occurred independently and spontaneously.

A preparedness support process offers even more of this scalability. It taps the existing bulwark of aid providers (local and expatriate) with all its capacity for messaging and mobilizing. It features the training of *wardens* who not only help sustain efforts in their community after local providers move on, but also help spread messaging and mobilization to neighboring communities. They borrow pedagogies for mass transmission of information (such as are used by landmine awareness and disaster risk reduction programs to reach millions of civilians) to spread self-protection messages.

Agencies can pitch these and other benefits of physical preparedness (such as its comparative advantages in *monitoring*, *attribution* and *evaluation*) to increase the interest and patronage of donors. They are described in further detail in CCHW documents.

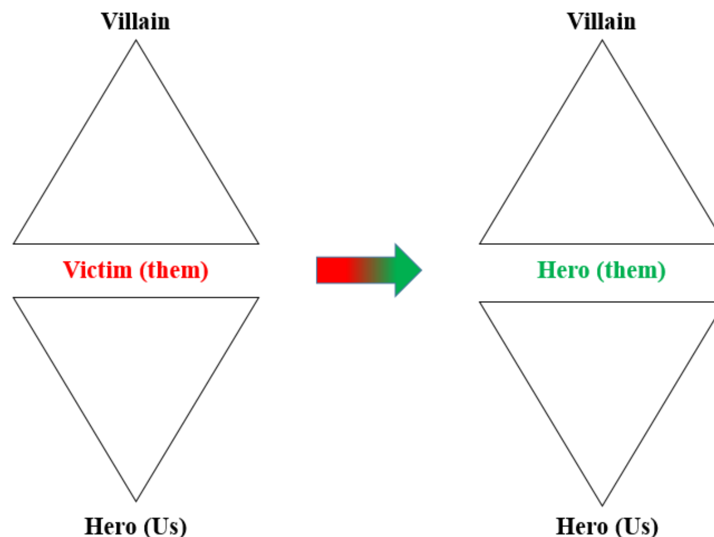
Pitch to Public

Over three decades ago, one of the matriarchs of forced migration studies, Barbara Harrell-Bond, asked a gathering of refugees, "How would you like your image to be portrayed by the media?" The answers came: Why not show us like we are, as people with ability to help ourselves? She subsequently wrote, "Why not indeed? But, might not the raison d 'etre of relief agencies be severely undermined if this image of refugees were to be projected by the media? Who would give money to refugees to help themselves? Humanitarian agencies are in a straitjacket with little else than human misery upon which to base their appeals."[57]

A generation later David Chandler claimed that the "humanitarian narrative" has "three components" for public consumption: "First, the hapless victim in distress, portrayed through film of the worst cases in the worst areas; second, the villain—the non-Western government or authority, causing famine, poverty, or violence… and third, the savior, the aid agency or institution, an external agency whose interests are seen as inseparable from those of the deserving victim."[58]

New mindsets for "humanitarian marketing"

Even today this villain-victim-hero storyline, albeit more subtly, puts the indispensable agency center stage. But there may be ways an agency can pitch more accurately and just as effectively to the public.



Old Generation of Mindsets for Marketing	New Generation of Mindsets for Marketing
They are helpless victims; humanity at its most vulnerable. They await rescue at the hands of heroes or death at the hands of villains, whichever comes first.	They are heroic villagers; humanity at its most valorous. They don't wait for feckless states to save them. They bravely and resourcefully cheat death.
They exist as at-risk individuals—the widow here, the orphan there. The proof is in those iconic pictures that capture their pained faces. We do not know that kind of anguish and fear ourselves, but at least we can help.	They exist as families—refusing to be widowed and orphaned. Pictures do not capture their bravery and the gritty sacrifices they make for their family. But we instantly and intimately know what they are trying to do: it is exactly what we would do for our loved ones.
It is a sense of pity and guilt that connects us to them. We will send them life-critical sustenance and services. We will stand up for their right to live. The pictures will then show their gratitude. In this way we help restore their humanity and dignity. (Still, we hope something will be done soon to stop the violence.)	It is a sense of solidarity and admiration that connects us to them. We see them cobbling together their life essentials. We see them living out their rights by outliving their killers. Their dignity derives from their own refusal to be victims. We help them prepare for this because there is no reasonable guarantee the violence will stop.
If and when they make it to a camp, they will receive basic necessities because they have lost everything. They will get counselling for the trauma and rape they have suffered. They will get tracing services to help find the loved ones they have been separated from. Our donation will help buy all of this.	If we make our donation early enough, it will support their efforts to set up warning, mobilize, and ready their families and possessions for hiding or flight. Our support of stipends for wardens and an array of preparatory steps will help them shield their children and stay a step ahead of thug killers, rapists, and pillagers.
We will give again, the next time such horrific images appear. (Unless, that is, we begin to feel that no matter what we do the helpless are hopeless and nothing will really change. Should we really be divested of our money if they can't sort out their own problems?)	We were moved to give not by belated shock or shame, but rather by an insight into human character and the foresight to act earlier. Perhaps we don't realize we are rewriting a very old script—but we now feel more deeply invested in them than before.

The Aya Award

How can a "new generation mindset" that markets preparedness support take hold? One way is to help aid agencies articulate it. The other way is to familiarize the public with it—indeed to the point that they expect it of the aid community.

Help agencies articulate it—
and have the public demand it.

As always, branding matters. An example: the Syria Civil Defense—also known as the White Helmets—are teams of Syrians who rush to "ground zero" right after attacks to conduct search and rescue. As with responders in every community across the globe they are seen as local heroes and are trusted. Thanks to their omniscient white helmet, the teams are also very recognizable. These Syrians have grown into a powerful symbol of local self-help.

In comparison, preparedness support wardens will help "prepare the ground" before such attacks, helping civilians in harm's way either brace or extract their families and assets. As with all public safety workers who help mitigate harm, they will earn wide popular trust. The sensitive and discreet nature of preparedness work does not allow local wardens to display open symbols. (This does not inhibit the public's recognition and acceptance of them because they use architecture and field craft that enable them to move and communicate safely enough in places where they may be targets.) It is the external aid community fostering preparedness which can adopt a recognizable symbol of this innovative work

There are many possible mixes of image and imagination to "market." One could be the Adinkra symbol of the *Aya*. Adinkra are visual symbols originating in West Africa. The Aya is the symbol representing the fern plant. This fern grows in harsh terrain and is recognized as a rugged and hardy plant. It is widely associated the traits of endurance, independence, defiance against difficulties, perseverance and resourcefulness. The

author of a visual primer on Adinkra noted that, "An individual who wears this symbol suggests that he has endured many adversities and outlasted much difficulty."[59]

The Aya

The aid community can craft a message notable for its honesty; one that is stark but not despairing: "We will continue our lifesaving work as long as possible, but this might be one of those times in which violence will end our meaningful reach and presence. We must now help our amazing local counterparts and communities to prepare for such a possibility."

An incentives campaign can help with this powerful yet challenging message viz-a-viz the public. The persuasion needs to come from two directions. On one hand—help agencies market it to the public. CCHW can provide archived facts; historical vignettes of local self-protection and outsider' support of it. Agencies can then blend this with evidence from their country programs currently at risk of collapse for a strong verbal and visual pitch. *Time is running out.* ***We are an Aya agency****—help us brace them for survival.*

On the other hand—build a market for it within the public that agencies must listen to. Pressure from this direction aims to reshape the public view of aid's boundaries—not unlike Médecins sans Frontiérs' successful campaign-turned-franchise in support of aid "without borders."

Making Aya an everyday name for the informed public's philanthropy might require a viral social media campaign. Or perhaps it might take sophisticated "documercials" about real-life civilian self-protection. Conversely, it might use romanticized but time-tested motifs for stirring the vanguard's support. These are "to-the-barricades!" rally cries (though here it may mean "to the sanctuaries!"). This marketing builds less on our "noblesse oblige" than on a profound sense of locals' own "bravery, dignity even nobility." In this case it is even more "marketable" because it is true. When the rescuer in the Academy Award winning documentary on *The White Helmets* says, "This work is sacred," we know we are hearing a truth.

Beyond this, mainstream media might be cajoled and coached to produce a second kind of "**CNN** Effect;" feature stories with a sort of ***C****hampion* ***N****obility* ***N****ow! Effect.* If we champion their noble efforts, a hero-hero storyline is created. This endeavor might require providing the media exposure to the phenomenon of civilian self-protection. (Workshops for war correspondents? Embedded stints with aid agencies for reporters? Contracts for freelance reportage on self-protection? Curricula for journalism schools?) The aim is to build a groundswell of awareness and expectation about supporting civilian self-protection. The question which might then be asked before opening the wallet to donate would be: *Are you an Aya agency?*

Build a wave of awareness and expectation about supporting civilian self-protection.

Bestowing the Aya award: Part of a campaign to build recognition of Aya agencies might be to establish an Aya award or designation. It could perhaps be conferred at two levels. Level One could be for agencies which (1) have made a policy commitment to preparedness support for local counterparts and communities, and (2) have provided the requisite orientation, training, and guidance tools in house (both at headquarters and in the field). Level Two could be for agencies which have done that *and* piloted preparedness support on the ground. The recognition that comes with being an Aya award recipient should be leveraged with both the giving public and organized donors.

The Aya award will have significant gravitas if bestowed by a highly renowned institution, as is noted in the discussion on prestigious partners toward the end of this document.

Peer Platforms

It would be very useful to provide places (physical, virtual, or both) where agencies can join around the issues of civilian self-protection. They might be permanent topical platforms, or semi-permanent ones tied to a given region or crisis. They offer a ready structure around which agencies can convene to catalyze and coordinate response to those given crises. Or more broadly they might be platforms from which participants can organize policy advocacy, peer pledges, or donor appeals.

The general purpose of sponsoring such peer platforms would be that they in some way advance the policy and practice of civilian self-protection. But the specific activities launched from these platforms should be decided by the agencies themselves.

Clout in numbers: policy advocacy, peer pledges, donor appeals, and field coordination.

An indirect benefit of peer platforms might accrue in that those agencies which are not yet participating may be paying attention to what their *colleague-competitors* are doing—and a sort of peer pressure may take hold.

Prestigious Partners

An aid agency will pay attention not just to its peers but also to a renowned entity (a think tank, government bureau, consultancy group, or university), particularly one having highly developed expertise regarding the dangerous milieu in which the agency works. Meanwhile, the renowned entity might see in the agency's grounded efforts to support civilian self-protection the chance to test and advance marquee approaches to a new generation of protection-related work. This is not imply that one is more committed or innovative than the other—they can (and should) spur each other forward in that regard.

Benefit to the agency.

The prospect of collaborating with prestigious or "pedigreed" partners can be an attractive inducement. To a significant degree, their imprimatur can confer status on, and their experienced hands can help hone the approach of, agencies working for civilian self-preservation. Using its convening power, that partner can assemble blue ribbon panels in which the agency and partner discuss innovation in civilian self-protection. Using its outreach capacity and wide readership, the partner can launch publications on the same topic to which both again contribute. A prominent partner can sponsor or host *peer platforms*, bestow the *Aya award*, and collaborate on *pilots* in the field. (For example, there might be scope for the partner's veteran staff to help backstop pilots with expertise in evaluative reporting.)

For the agency, collaborating with prestigious or "pedigreed" partners is an attractive inducement.

These collaborations can further flesh out the preparedness paradigm: why it serves the most existential obligations and self-interests of the aid community, what guidance for it may look like, and how to discuss it with paying patrons.

As a perhaps obvious caveat, the more established the prospective partner's commitment to the welfare of civilians in harm's way already is, then the more knowledgeable and useful it will be in this collaboration.

Benefit to the partner.

If this prospective partner has a deep commitment to the welfare of civilians who face violence, then such a collaboration will benefit it as well. Indeed, if the partner's commitments straddle any of myriad other hot-button issues tied to civilians in harm's way, it will further benefit. This is because the act of helping civilians brace for violence can complement efforts in many other fields related to peace and conflict. Local capacity for self-preservation has powerful implications not just for aid and protection but also human rights, nonviolent

resistance, disaster risk reduction, early warning and response, peacekeeping, and security sector reform, as well as efforts to manage conflict, reduce recruitment into violence, mitigate displacement, and prevent conflict returning.

The knock-on effects of civilians being better prepared for inexorable violence have scarcely been considered. These linkages, sometimes so fundamental as to go unobserved, are overviewed in CCHW's Briefing Series. Nothing else has such crosscutting potential as preparedness: it is the hidden common denominator of all those fields. Aid service providers will often be the best situated to support local preparedness, whether in endangered urban enclaves or rural hinterlands. If partners from those other fields get better "joined up" with these providers, then they may see a very impactful multiplier upon their own work. This benefit awaits the partner who is willing to think outside the silo.

Collaboration will appeal most to the partner who believes that status quo methods are failing.

Collaboration will appeal most to the partner who, though "pedigreed" in its own right, believes that status quo methods are failing and seeks alternative ways to help civilians survive the world's worst violence. Such a partner sees support for civilian self-protection as an idea whose time has come and wants to be part of a marquee initiative to advance it. This partner considers itself to be a think-and-do tank or institution. The result it seeks does stay in the realm of academia or advocacy, but rather is directly actionable. It sees great value added in partnering with like-minded aid agencies on the ground. Together, with support from CCHW, they may pilot new ways to help civilians survive alone in the face of violence that proves unstoppable.

ENDNOTES

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[15] Abby Stoddard, et. al., *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: Trends in Policy and Operations*, Humanitarian Policy Group, HPG Report 23, Overseas Development Institute, London, September 2006; p. 43.
[16] *Report on Security for Humanitarian Personnel: Standards and Practices for the Security for Humanitarian Personnel and Advocacy for Humanitarian Space*, European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), Brussels, 2004; p. 22.
[17] John Fawcett and Victor Tanner, *The Security of National Staff: Towards Good Practices*, A Report for InterAction, Washington, DC, 27 July 2001; pp. 6 & 7.
[18] Jan Egeland, Adele Harmer and Abby Stoddard, *To Stay and Deliver: Good Practice for Humanitarians in Complex Security Environments*, commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Policy and Studies Series, 2011; p. 25. The authors find that, "Despite its commonplace and often protracted usage, however, very few agencies have systematically or strategically planned for when, whether, and how to employ this practice [of remote management] as an effective programmatic adaptation, as opposed to an ad hoc response. As a result, the outcome was sometimes an unethical transfer of risk to national staffers and local partners..." **See also:** Abby Stoddard, et. al, *Once Removed: Lessons and Challenges in Remote Management of Humanitarian Operations for Insecure Areas*, Humanitarian Outcomes, London, 25 February 2010; pp. 22 and 35. The report contends that, "One of the key findings in Afghanistan, which holds true for other remote management contexts, is that … most NGOs consider remote management to be a temporary measure, [and] very few have thought through an exit strategy or criteria to guide the shift back from remote management."
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