The Preparedness Support Process

As violence approaches, an aid agency[†] can do more to support the capacity of its *counterparts*—its local staff and partners—to serve alone in the face of danger. As violence approaches, that agency can, with those counterparts in the lead, do more to support the capacity of *communities* to survive alone in the face of danger. That is, we in the aid world can help local providers and populations physically prepare today for the violence they will face after being separated from us tomorrow.

Most in our industry feel a certain "duty of care" to the local providers we increasingly rely upon as danger closes in. Most also take care not to accidentally put the populations we serve further in harm's way—we have been increasingly guided by the dictum that says we shall "*do no harm.*" The next watershed commitment for agencies must be the neglected but obvious other half of that maxim: "*Nor shall we lull or leave them in harm's way, unprepared*."

Strategic foresight is the key to this. It also is the key to getting positioned to offer wiser remote support while separated and the key to hitting the ground running upon return someday. This represents a continuity of mission such as we have rarely established before. We can make much better use of the precious time between the violent events that first trigger our concern and the threshold events that later force us to withdraw. Until now we have been likely to draw up plans to tighten our programs and pull back our foreign personnel—but not apt to make much provision for the safety of our local staff who will be left behind in the path of danger, perhaps holding the keys to our shop. So too, we have been unlikely to help our local partners prepare for their future security—or, of greater consequence, help local communities prepare for their future protection—alone against violence that proves unpreventable.

> *We can help local providers and populations physically prepare today for the violence they will face after being separated from us tomorrow.*

Our conflict prevention efforts rarely help locals prepare for a failure to prevent violence. Our human rights efforts rarely share tactical skills for living out those rights by outliving killers. Our early warning efforts can get an alarm out, but rarely wire warning to those in harm's way. Mainstreaming protection into our daily work helps—until violence stops that work midstream. Protection projects based on our presence stop protecting locals when we can no longer be with them: those projects are rarely portable, adaptable, or applicable to the atrocities locals might face next. 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 strengthen the very people who are left standing alone as violence shuts the world out.

Local providers and populations, as well as aid agencies and donors, all deserve more options and the ***Center for Civilians in Harm's Way*** offers one: "**Preparedness support**". It is at first

[†] This refers both to development and humanitarian aid providers. Both often face looming violent threats that they may be ill-prepared for. Their aid has expanded to include civil society, rights, prevention, warning and more.

glance based on our vulnerability and locals' capacity. *But ironically, admitting our limitations immediately points us toward other opportunities for which we have comparative advantages:* We doing aid work excel at grassroots mobilization. We can help revamp local providers and help ready local populations for self-protection in ways that are sustained and replicable. Preparedness support can become Plan B.

The idea is not new. Many of the best and brightest in the aid world have long urged aid providers to invest in local capacity for self-preservation. They do so because of widespread and oft-worsening problems of humanitarian access. They also urge it because self-protection has existed as the lowest and often only canopy of protection for millennia. It is not enough for us to praise locals' ability for "coping" or "resilience". Instead, as the Center proposes, their hard-earned lessons from yesterday should be captured in modular menus that facilitators share tomorrow with those who face a deadly learning curve—to help them shorten it.

Most of this violence is happening in nations of the global South. Preparedness support is as a result largely a South-to-South transfer of knowledge. Comparable efforts to understand and help systematize local self-protection efforts are underway in Africa and Asia. But experiments like these need to be exponentially ramped up. The best platforms available for fostering preparedness are local service providers and we their global counterparts, who together form a huge potential bulwark for protection in the remote and unstable areas where our work takes place.

As a Plan B, preparedness support is a supplement (not a substitute) for today's repertoire of protection efforts. The two are quite different, but language can quickly confuse. Many of us in aid work do indeed already support protection at the community level. Yet in too many cases, a project that we call "community-based" is not community-*born*. In too many projects that we call self-protection, the word "self" is appended to the names of projects that *we* conceive and a local community then runs it-*self*. And the projects we bestow, grounded in well-meaning liberal-democratic norms, are sometimes quite maladapted for a populace under the gun.

> *Preparedness support is less complex and less costly than our existing protections and more easily evaluated for results.*

Preparedness support is far less confusing and cumbersome than the protection enterprise that we have created; only two decades old, that establishment is in some ways now sclerotic. While we lack a lucid definition for "protection", debate its place in our work, and often claim that a strong cadre of protection expertise is hard to find—men, women and children across all conflicts and all cultures carry out their own protection.

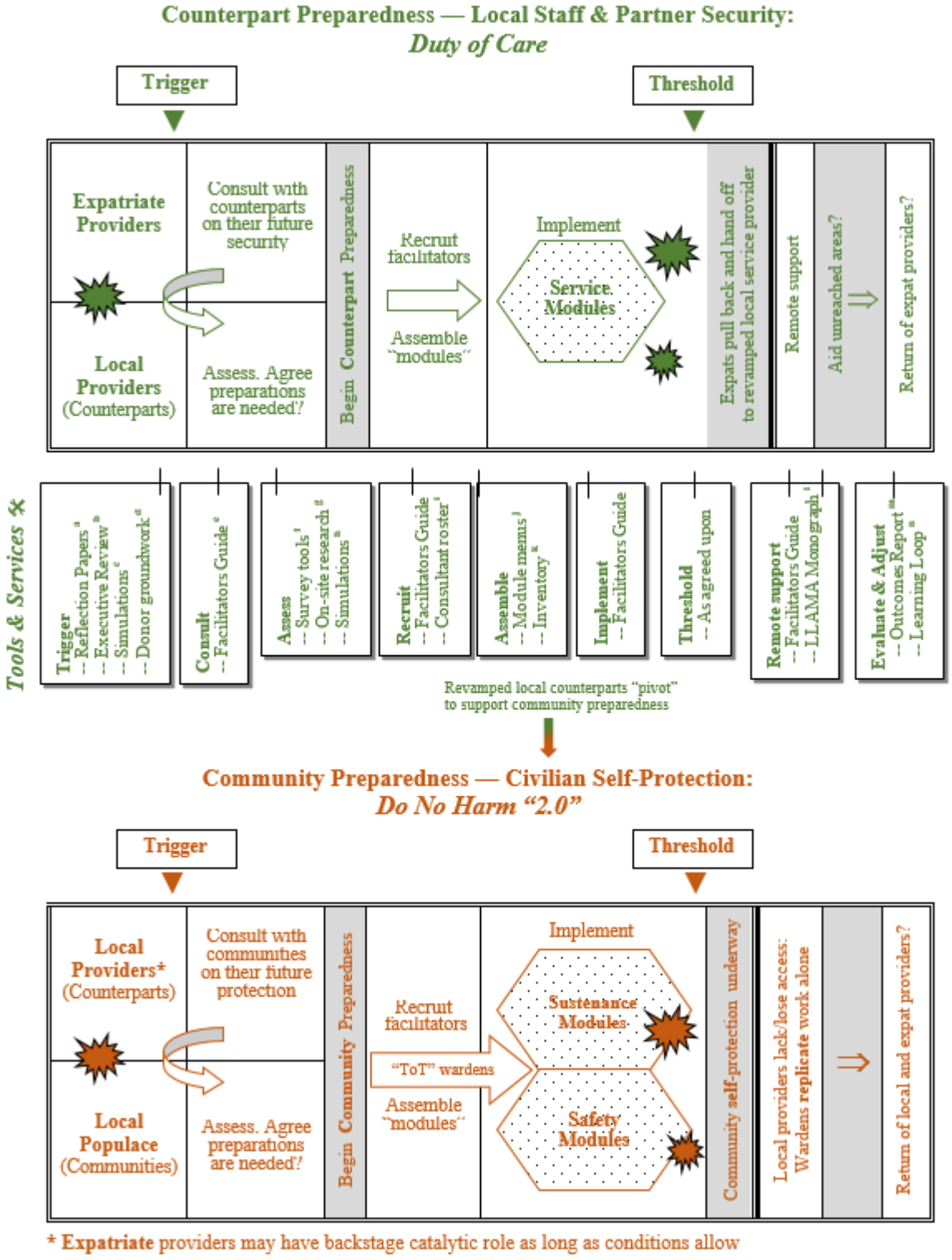
Preparedness support is also far less expensive than "hard" protection and vastly less expensive than picking up pieces in the aftermath of no protection. Its financial inputs might involve (1) *stipends* for facilitators and wardens to run modules. It also might include *micro grants* for (2) families arranging "asset protection plans," (3) communities preparing "risk reduction plans," (4) local groups employing youth in "public service plans" as an alternative to recruitment into violence, and (5) local providers revamping with "retrofitted delivery plans". And to the extent that wardens want to branch out to neighboring communities, then inputs might include (5) "inter-community messaging plans".

> *The idea is not new. The best and brightest in the aid world have long urged us to invest in local self-preservation.*

And preparedness support—with its focus on tangible physical actions—can be evaluated and attributed toward results with a much higher degree of confidence than most current protection strategies. Many of today's strategies require individual, civil, legal, political, juridical, institutional, or even societal change. With those forms of protection it has always been hard to demonstrate what donors' money actually buys.

This might all sound compelling—but there are also reasons, whether conscious or not, why we have not yet helped locals brace for coming violence in more systematic ways. The question of what obligation we have to help local counterparts and communities brace for unstoppable violence needs more reflection. Only the executive leadership in each agency can make this decision: this is the first necessary step.

The table below shows The Center's view of how preparedness support unfolds step by step and the corresponding tools and services it can offer to help aid agencies engage in that support.



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

Trigger

Preparedness support doctrine distinguishes between the early "trigger" concerns that prompt us to tighten our emergency pullback plans and the later "threshold" conditions that compel us to act on those plans. What an agency chooses to do with the precious time between those two is at the heart of the matter. The basic purpose of preparedness is to see that an arc of violence does not get too far ahead of our learning and preparing curve.

We are best at readying our programs, properties, and expatriate personnel for violence. Beyond that, our contingency planning might not be very robust or inclusive. Too often, as we expatriates begin to lose access, local staff are left as first-tier targets with second-class security. Too often, our planning for post-access strategies like remote management is thin or even absent. And seldom do we help bolster the safety of soon-to-be isolated local partners and populations.

But should our concern extend to them? Does impending violence impose obligations on us? Do we have a "duty of care" to our counterparts; an onus to help ensure they are not harmed as a result of having joined our work? Do we have a "responsibility to protect" communities and the years of vital work we may have done in them? Is our sense of obligation in these regards strong enough to trigger in us a new level of resolve?

a Reflection Papers

The Center's **reflection paper**, ***Why Should We Help Locals Brace for Violence?***, describes how such help is in our profound self-interest and is simply a necessity given the inevitable limits to our influence and access when atrocities begin. It also describes how our promising efforts at remotely run service provision and community-based protection must be taken to their next logical levels if they are to succeed.

The Center's **reflection paper**, ***Why Don't We Help Locals Brace for Violence?***, addresses the mind sets that make us hesitate to support local capacity for self-preservation even though we frequently extolling it. The reasons, sometimes more assumed than articulated, include: (1) We are the rescuers, they are the victims; (2) We are too busy saving lives; (3) We are professionals serving a profession; (4) Supporting local self-protection endangers our principles; (5) Supporting local self-protection can put us in harm's way; (6) Supporting local self-protection can put them in harm's way; and (7) We lack skills in tactical self-protection: only guys with guns can do real protection. This second paper addresses mindsets that are either false and need to be debunked, or have some merit—yet are fixable.

The purpose of these reflection papers is to hold a mirror up to our beliefs and assumptions. The target group is, at a minimum, agency leadership. After in-house discussion of the papers, the Center's staff next might be invited to talk with the agency about the many questions the papers give rise to.

b Executive Review

The Center can talk with agency leadership about its current (if any) position in regard to "helping locals prepare to serve and survive alone amid violence". The executive review entails a *policy scrub* and a *staff survey*; and if leadership chooses, it can proceed to a *draft policy*.

The ***policy scrub*** looks at security documents and mission documents. Security documents reveal who we intend to keep safe, how, and beginning when. Their aim to reduce *risks* can

come into tension with mission documents and their avowal to bring *benefits*. Mission documents express an agency's raison d'être—perhaps serving a vulnerable group; it's credo—perhaps building the capacity of local counterparts even during emergencies; its niche—perhaps risk reduction; it's institutional commitment—perhaps a "duty of care" for its local counterparts. Together all these documents shape an agency's *risk-benefit* calculation of whether or not to help locals brace for future dangers even as those dangers are closing in. The weighting of that calculation is seldom specified in policy—and perhaps not even understood and agreed upon, either by agency leadership or rank and file, until violence forces it to be decided.

The ***staff survey*** elicits staff opinion as to whether or not local counterparts and communities are, in given hypothetical situations, prepared to serve and survive amid violence *alone*. It also probes staff perceptions about the agency's level of involvement, if any, in supporting such preparation and whether or not they perceive that level as appropriate. The survey is given to staff in headquarters as well as the field. (The security of staff and protection of civilians are issues about which home office and field staff sometimes have very different vantage points and opinions.)

A ***draft policy*** is next developed if the agency so chooses. Even today, "many organizations lack a structured way of thinking about" physical and ethical risks. [1] "Most agencies and donors lack well-defined risk thresholds and exit strategies to guide decision-making." [2] Without policy to motivate and guide it is unlikely there will be a trigger for robust and inclusive preparations. The basic elements of a draft policy could be: (1) A *clear statement of intention*. For example: "It is the policy of this agency to help, when and as appropriate, our local staff and partners to safely serve, and our beneficiary communities to more ably survive, alone amid violence. This policy is rooted in our…" (2) A description of what "when" means. This requires the agency to *define its trigger*—the *red line* concerns which shall obligate it to systematically consult with local counterparts to jointly assess their future security.

Without a policy to motivate and guide it is hard to see how there will be a trigger for robust and inclusive preparations.

(3) An avowal that "as appropriate" means *locally chosen tactics* for service and survival will be prioritized as long as they are indeed in the locals' net best interest and within the agency's conscionable duty. (4) An indication of how the agency will meet any prerequisites for *making the policy actionable*. Any program requires a degree of buy-in and pay-out. Thus the draft policy might outline the path by which the agency will ensure staff understands and supports the policy—especially in light of any strong views they voiced about this critical subject during the survey. It also might identify the source funding the nominal costs associated with preparedness support.

The funding source over which an agency has the most discretion to innovate with is its own unearmarked and publicly raised monies. Beyond this, donor resources in the developmental aid and humanitarian aid realms can be steered toward preparedness support.

c Simulations

Reflection papers, internal surveys and policy discussions do not necessarily result in the requisite imagination and incentive to make leaps into new practice. Well-crafted simulations are known to help people re-conceptualize their view of "how things are" and what is possible. This has real implications for aid policy and doctrine. Yet in regard to civilian capacity, crisis simulations have largely failed to elucidate how things are and what is possible.

In simulations conducted for military-peacekeeping-humanitarian intervention, the amorphous "population at-risk" typically exists only as an object *to which things are done*, such as abuse and rescue. That is the definition of helpless. But if scripted to include local counterparts and communities who actually have "agency", then the outcomes might be less institutional or state-centric and a new lower canopy of options may be revealed. It is important for aid leadership at the highest levels to continually expose themselves to new possibilities. Failing that they may be trapped by a professionalism that is too self-referential and increasingly sclerotic.

In regard to simulations, the tool provided would be the software or desktop aids and the service would be an observer-controller.

d Donor Groundwork

This service consists of (1) donor research (profiling their geographic focus, country strategy, project selection criteria, funding mechanisms, timetables, etc.), and (2) advance bridge-building. Aid agencies and aid donors will find more optimal outcomes by bending towards each other's needs and wisdom. The Center can be an informal intermediary in this regard. Fred Cuny once wrote that, "Donor education is one of the most important aspects to be addressed in improving the performance of the relief system." [3] The Center can talk with donors about preparedness support and also about those aid agencies that are working toward a *draft policy* on it. It can alert donors as to *why* an agency is looking at preparedness contingencies and detail its possible application in a given troubled country.

Education flows both directions over the bridge being strengthened here: The Center can also show agencies how some of donors' most valid concerns—stronger reporting of results, for example—can persuasively be addressed through a protection focus like preparedness support.

> Certain redline threats should trigger an aid agency's concern—as well as a donor's criteria for funding as well.

Despite preparedness support's modest price tag, some agencies might consider expressions of interest from external funders to be a prerequisite for adopting a policy on it. In such cases, the Center will work to gain a donor's provisional interpretation that certain redline threats should indeed trigger an aid agency's readiness—and the donor's rationale for funding as well.

As noted, that funding might include stipends for facilitators and wardens to run modules, or micro grants for families arranging "asset protection plans," communities preparing "risk reduction plans," local groups employing youth in "public service plans" as an alternative to recruitment into violence, local providers revamping with "retrofitted delivery plans", and wardens pursuing inter-community messaging plans".

Examples:

Two pilot self-protection programs in South Kordofan, Sudan, provide a rudimentary sense of scope and scale. Supported by the innovative Danish group *Local to Global Protection*, they undertake just a small cross-section of the activities possible under preparedness support—which makes their initial activity all the more impressive. Their 2011 pilot in the Nuba Mountains trained 54 volunteers how to share knowledge about safe response to bombardments, early warning systems, mines/UXO, food caches, primary health care and herbal treatments. They also were trained in mobilizing families and communities dig bomb shelters, host displaced persons, and handle psycho-social trauma. The volunteers travelled in male-female pairs for six months. The pilot reports that they reached about 75,000 people at a cost of less than $30,000.

The second pilot began in 2012 and was comprised of women-led protection groups. An initial group of fourteen was trained in facilitation practices as well as protection practices (how to respond to bombardments; how to attain or devise life-critical sustenance and services, the latter including psycho-social care). This initial group then trained five new groups over a month's period. For the next four months these second-generation groups were reported to have reached 18,000 people. The pilot's cost, folding in $150 start-up grants for the groups as well as training, travel and materials expenses, was reported to be about $1 per person reached with this protection messaging.

> The pilot's costs was reported to be about $1 per person reached with life-saving information.

Consult

Preparedness involves *two separate sets* of consultation: one in support of counterparts and the other in support of communities. The first one is between expatriate providers and their local counterparts. Expatriates might or might not be the ones who initiate this. It is quite possible that worries or warnings first voiced by counterparts are "the trigger" that pushes an agency to consult with them about preparedness.

The primary reason to consult is to determine if there is, on the face of it, enough evidence that violence threatens the safety, efficacy, or continuity of aid operations. If there is, then the question becomes whether and how to move from anecdotal consultation to more systematic assessment. It is a serious question because a sensitive process has already begun—and assessment is an even more intrusive step that requires discretion amid volatile conditions. If there is chance that expatriates will pull back, then consulting in an extremely collaborative way with local counterparts will help reduce the "risk transfer" that so often accompany remote management operations. [4]

The second set of consultations is then between these local providers and the local populace. (Local providers now make a "pivot" from being receivers of preparedness support to providers of it.) Expatriate staff may retain a backstage catalytic role. With the risk that expatriates will pull out, having locals in the lead means there will be less danger of raising the false (and all-too-common) hope or expectation that outsiders will "provide" protection.

This second tier consultation cannot start however until local providers do a reality check. In a dynamic which we outsiders often underestimate, being host nationals does not guarantee they will have the requisite awareness and adaptability or that locals will even accept them. Non-local nationals may actually be suspect as "outsiders". Moreover, even when area residents trust talking to a provider about their future protection strategies, the provider itself might feel wary, of or unqualified for, this role. Therefore one of the optional learning modules is focused on "adjusting the mission" so as to support civilian self-protection. Like the other modules, this one aims to help a provider remain safe, effective—*and relevant*. By first getting itself prepared, the provider is then better positioned to consult with communities about their own preparations.

e Facilitators' Guide

The **facilitators' guide** is the Center's primary tool; for each step in the preparedness process it offers generic context, guidance notes, and options. It is not called a "How to" manual for the

same reason facilitation is not called training. This is not about the transfer of knowledge from those who know "how to" to those who need to "be trained". Overly prescriptive manuals and training may create a hierarchical project that can fail in deadly fashion. Preparedness support must take root as an organic part of the local environment. Yes, foreign agencies will have vital skills, experience, and information to offer (including a grasp of how civilians elsewhere in the global South survive violence). But each step of preparedness support entails sharing of skills, experience, and information found *on all sides*. This is the way toward strong iterative learning.

Precautions start now because the possibility of unintended consequences starts now. One of the *Guidance Notes* states: "First ask yourself how potentially affected parties might respond if they heard every word of your consultations—because the security default assumption must be that word will get out. Then ask: How might potentially affected parties misunderstand or even manipulate your consultations? Plan accordingly." The need for discretion grows if the process continues toward assessment and implementation. The **facilitators' guide** therefore cites classic confidentiality protocols, standard communications security, and counter surveillance methods.

Assess

f Survey tools

The Center offers survey tools that assess preparedness in three areas: (1) life-critical *service*, (2) life-critical *sustenance*, and (3) *safety*. These three vital strands cannot be separated. Far more people die during conflict from the collapse of sustenance and service delivery than from direct violence. Belligerents strategically attack these elemental things and civilians often take physical risks to obtain them. No protection picture or baseline is complete without these three composite surveys. In turn, each survey examines conditions, vulnerability, and capacity.

Conditions (both reported and observed). This segment examines enough* indicators to establish baselines on levels of service, sustenance, and safety. It also captures "trends" impacting (harming or helping) those baselines. This latter portion examines the conflict and to some extent* its interplay with political and economic activity.

> Far more people die during conflict from the collapse of sustenance and services than from direct violence.

* In our industry's push for professionalism it is assumed survey instruments should have evermore scope, depth and rigor. But it is not certain that a state-of-art analysis, and the liberal-democratic engineering efforts which often proceed from it, are appropriate or even possible in places that may soon lapse into a state of anarchy. Instead, the immediate and unfortunate effect of this sophistication can be to delimit who actually does assessment. Us.

> If the assessment leads to agreement that preparations are needed, then its findings will inform the rest of the process.

Vulnerabilities (both reported and observed). This segment will to some extent parallel the trending conditions above to identify and disaggregate the resulting impacts on specific at-risk groups.

Capacities (both reported and observed). This segment will to some extent parallel the vulnerabilities identified above, matching risks to remedies when the findings suggest it. Critical findings will include "What has been tried?" (reported) and "What has worked—at what risk or tradeoff?" and "What has not worked?" Local successes will become the priority entry point.

Capacities surveyed include physical/material, social/organizational, and attitudinal/motivational elements.

Obviously an assessment is not done only to see if there is a genuine threat. If the completed assessment leads to a "green light" agreement that preparations are needed, then its findings will also inform subsequent steps in the process: Do these findings suggest we should recruit for a certain kind of expertise or experience? Do the issues raised by these surveys suggest certain content ought to be included in the modules? And most significantly, how will these *baseline findings* on service, sustenance, and safety compare in *later evaluations* after the people have faced violence alone—will it all vindicate the principle of preparedness?

g On-Site Research

T.B.A.

The possibility of formalizing a network of protection researchers already known to the *Center for Civilians in Harm's Way* into a standby pool for sub-contracted deployment will be reviewed. The purpose would be to augment an agency's assessment abilities in a given country.

h Simulations

T.B.A.

Good assessments provide facts on baseline conditions. The best ones *also* provide feedback on options. Baseline information gathered via ground surveys or research can provide data not only about locals' vulnerabilities but their *capacities as well*. Might such information, if fed into scripted simulations, provide more guidance about whether to embark on preparedness support—and if so, how?

The Center for Civilians in Harm's Way will examine the possible utility of simulations not only during the headquarters policy adoption stage cited earlier but also in the field assessment phase. This may include "Sims" ranging from software-driven models (like DEXES) down to facilitated desktop and roleplay events, to mapping, sand tables, or ground exercises on site. Any such method of gaming and visualizing local capacities (particularly with the participation of local staff or partners) can be useful in making the final "Go-No go" decision. It might also reveal some very grounded actionable tactics.

Recruit
for counterpart preparedness

The **reflection paper** notes that one of more paralyzing reasons that we have not often helped locals brace for violence is the unspoken feeling that "we lack the skills to do this". But a quick look around reveals many people with the unconventional skills and hard-won experience to save lives in violent settings. There are locals and expatriates capable of facilitating preparedness. It is our job to find them. The **facilitators' guide** offers insights on recruiting for counterpart preparedness.

A team of facilitators is recruited to assemble, then implement, "Service modules". The modules target an agency's local *staff*, typically numbering in the tens or hundreds. (Also, if agreed, these service modules can be shared concurrently or later with local *partners*.) The team has expatriate and local members. Since preparedness is built squarely upon local interpretation of local realities, indigenous recruits are the indispensable bridge.

Team members are apt to come from four pools: everyday aid workers (primary pool), and then an occasional consultant in emergency livelihoods, local security, and peacekeeping-civilian liaison matters.

(1)(a) *Everyday local counterparts*. It does not matter which field-based sector they work in, and they do not need the word "protection" in their job title. They are local aid workers—the backbone of our agency. The most tenured and respected can be identified for the team, whether through nomination or agency selection. Another qualification might be experience in discreet relief or other public aid. "Discreet" need not mean non-transparent or non-consensual action. Low-profile service comes in a variety of shades and innovations.

(1)(b) *Everyday foreign aid workers*. Most expatriates on the team can be staff who are already employed by the agency. As with the local counterparts, their sectors and job titles are not vital. They would largely be selected for the strengths that often make aid workers unique: good situational awareness, rapport with local counterparts, and improvisational problem solving. A key problem which they will solve together with those counterparts is how to adjust and continue the aid mission in the face of a possible expatriate withdrawal.

It does not matter what sector they work in, nor do they need the word 'protection' in their title. They would be selected for the strengths that make aid workers unique.

Described below are three more pools from which it may be advisable to recruit. This only reflects the obvious: there are dangerous complexities involving livelihoods and wartime economies that both foreign and local aid workers may lack the time and the expertise to understand. And there are security and peacekeeping practices that such aid workers are often either wary of or unaware of.

Consultant roster

The Center will cultivate cadres of experts in emergency livelihoods, local security, or peacekeeping-civilian liaison with experience fostering local capacity in conflict settings, and who are amenable to taking consultancies with an aid agency, pending their availability. The Center will also provide advice on hiring and preparing scopes of work for these experts.

(2) *Emergency livelihood consultants*. The discipline of emergency livelihoods has helped agencies better map and navigate the dangers (to people and programs) of conflict economies. There is much that emergency livelihoods experts could discuss with our local counterparts who will bear the brunt of supporting civilians' economic survival as we exit (such as conserving, diversifying or substituting assets, lending, remittances, safe black markets, etc.).

We have been introducing paramilitary concepts to them for years—sometimes in amateurish ways.

(3) *Security consultants*. Many NGOs, UN bodies and prominent donors such as USAID, ECHO, and DfID have contracted private security talent. We have hired their advice to protect

our properties, programs, and foreign personnel—*not local civilians* per se. Why ought we introduce security consultants and military concepts to our local counterparts? Because we have been introducing paramilitary concepts like neighborhood watches, patrols and warning mechanisms to them and communities for years—sometimes in amateurish ways. The kinds of nonlethal military field craft that can save civilian lives are rudimentary and can easily be contracted. The **facilitator's guide** covers this in detail.

(4) *Peacekeeping (PK) civilian liaisons*. Why ought we introduce PK civilian liaisons to our local counterparts? Because PK forces logistically cannot protect more than a fraction of the many hundreds of thousands of civilians in PK mission areas even if directed to. Yet in these same afflicted areas there often are local providers and populations with real untapped capacity. It is not too much to reason that leveraging their capacity can alter the strategic arithmetic.

To get peacekeepers and a populace joined up requires the two to have a harmonized view of protection. Locals need to understand a mission's purposes, rules of engagement, limitations—and where protection fits into that. Conversely, the PK mission needs to understand the many ways that locals survive and even serve each other amid violence. A security consultant can share expertise about in-situ policing, patrolling, early warning and early response. That early local response might cover a provisional period (hours? days?) of self-reliance before PK forces arrive. A PK liaison would be integral to contingency planning such as this.

There are other benefits to a harmonized view of protection. Two-way flows of information help locals with landmines or public service topics raised via radio bulletin, and help a mission with its force protection, surveillance, and monitoring of abuses since in each case it can count on more friendly eyes and ears on the ground. Synchronized physical movement can help PKs and locals act in concert during difficult and dangerous maneuvers like evacuation corridors, inter-positioning, separating combatant from noncombatant, or cordon-and-search.

* * * * *

The **facilitators' guide** provides detail about the recruitment cited above. It also describes how preparedness unfolds both as a hybrid stand-alone *and* mainstreamed process.

Recruit
for community preparedness

The similarly structured process of *community* preparedness also entails teams of facilitators who assemble and implement modules, but this time the focus is on "sustenance" and "safety". Another new feature is its use of area residents and wardens. Teams include the following:

(1) *Everyday local counterparts*. (See earlier description.) Perhaps half of the team can be comprised of local staff who are already employed by the agency. Even without past experience working under the gun, they will be well guided by their good situational awareness, rapport with local communities, improvisational problem solving, and skills in grassroots mobilization.

> Local counterparts need area residents. They know not only how to act but, more critically, what motivates people to act.

Such workers can, for example, talk with women and children about locations and situations to avoid. They can talk with families about preparing caches and flight kits, protecting property documents, coaching children (what to do and where to meet if separated, etc.), prepositioning

elderly or infirm, conserving foods, substituting medicines, backstopping remittances, reacting properly landmines, and much, much more.

(2) *Area residents*. For the same reasons that foreign providers need local counterparts, local counterparts need area residents. Many host national staff are actually not resident to the places they serve and may lack the requisite local awareness and access. Beyond this criterion of residency, it will help to recruit for individuals who are locally respected; natural leaders and learners as well as individuals with hard-won experience in survival. Consider the transferrable knowledge held by those who are too often treated as wards—elders, women, and the displaced. They often know not only how to act but, more critically, what motivates people to act.

Another set of useful skills and experience can be previous soldiering. No one knows the specific weapons and tactics that threaten civilians better than local former soldiers themselves. No one knows the habits and limits of specific armed units better than they do. They know much that civilians should not have to learn by deadly trial and error. The **facilitators' guide** talks about this in more detail.

* * * * *

Given the possibility of populations thinly dispersed over distances and astride terrain that slows down travel, there must be multiple mobile teams. Moreover, even if mobile, teams simply cannot directly visit every cluster of population (a challenge to dissemination) nor can they make follow-up visits to each and every place (a challenge to sustainability). Thus the most grassroots level of recruitment entails identifying "wardens" who can come to gathering points if teams are unable to reach their own communities.

(3) *Wardens*. The most likely pools of individuals to serve as wardens might be those who by such social standing, social contract, or social unit are most apt to help their people. Once at these gatherings, wardens will be coached in how to facilitate preparedness modules. This greatly aids in the indirect but exponential ("second generation") spread of discussion modules on sustenance and safety. These wardens also help oversee and anchor preparations in situ thus greatly aiding its sustainability. And to the extent that wardens branch out to neighboring communities, then preparedness is *replicated* beyond the initial service area.

> Wardens are those trusted locals who by social standing, social contract, or social unit are most apt to aid their people.

Assemble

As dull as it may sound, the thing that is being assembled through preparedness support is a transmissible body of information. We often validate our aid effort in terms of its throw weight. The number of "metric tons delivered" is almost treated as the measure of the commitment that we have made. The closest that preparedness support comes to using weight as a measure or metaphor of its effectiveness is the adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

> Breaking situation reports can provide vital context—and be just as decisive as preparedness tactics.

Atrocities can never happen here—can they? When will the marauding soldiers come? How is cholera spread? What do landmines look like? Who to trust, when to flee, what to take, where to shelter, how to react on contact… Every step forces questions that need reliable answers. As Kofi Annan claimed, "information on conflicts… can be as vital a requirement for distressed

populations caught in areas of violent upheaval as shelter, food, water and medical services." [5] And unlike those commodities and services—peoples' *knowledge cannot be stripped away*.

The facilitation teams decide what information they would prioritize for dissemination. That information will typically come in two forms: news and knowledge. Aid agencies can have advantages in accessing *news* on current events and they often do share it with counterparts and communities in a variety of ways. Situation updates can provide vital context—and be just as decisive as preparedness tactics. (Expatriates can keep providing "distance news/warning" even after they pull back, as noted in the module "Remote support I".)

In regard to *knowledge* that might be shared in modules, The Center offers two tools. One is a composite menu of preparedness "modules" and the other is an historical "inventory" of how civilians survive violence alone.

j **Module menus**.

The Center currently has compiled 14 modules: five in the strand or cluster on Service, three on Sustenance, and six on Safety. Each module cites an array of potential activities under its theme. Every activity of every module is of course optional and open to modification to suit the context. The modules are ***menus***—ready for addition or subtraction in modular fashion.

> The purpose of outlining modules is to capture and preserve hard-won experiences; to get these experiences centralized—not standardized—and shared.

The only purpose of outlining modules is to capture and preserve the hard-won experiences of providers and civilians who have survived violence, and make such knowledge available to others now facing violence. The aim is to get their experiences (one could say "best practices") *centralized—not standardized*—and shared. There are too many diverse situations for a preparedness initiative ever to be prescriptive. Action that saved lives in one time and place might endanger them in another, and vice versa.

Importantly, even just talking about the modules' content fosters vigilance and frees up thinking outside one's immediate experience or expertise. Adoption and adaptation of even just a few of the activities listed can save a great many lives. Below are modules corresponding to hundreds of actions that have already been observed in conflict settings. Conditions on the ground of any given setting would of course add to or subtract from this draft list:

<u>Local Service Delivery</u>: (Life-critical services)

Module ~ Remote support (I): Continuing to aid your service area
Module ~ Physical safety for local service providers ("field craft")
Module ~ Deconstructing aid institutions ("architecture")
Module ~ Adjusting the mission: Supporting civilian self-protection *****
Module ~ Remote support (II): Aiding unreached areas (LLAMA)

<u>Economic Survival</u>: (Life-critical sustenance)

Module ~ Conserve assets
Module ~ Broaden assets
Module ~ Strip and transfer assets

<u>Physical Safety</u>:

Module ~ Information collection and control

Module ~ Communications
Module ~ Safe sites
Module ~ Safe movement
Module ~ Response on contact with threat
Module ~ Liaison with peacekeepers

***** This module compels an aid agency to examine its "reason for being" and its continued relevance in the face of violence. This goes to the heart of our counterparts' mindset and skill set. It is not enough to retrofit a service delivery *vehicle* to conflict conditions as the other modules do. The imperatives of communities under threat will have been changing and the question for the provider will become whether and how to adjust the *content* of what it delivers? For example, should an agricultural extension agency keep supporting conventional farming and animal husbandry that is increasingly vulnerable to predation—or should it shift to services that help civilians diversify into livelihood practices less subject to attack?

The **survey tools** cited earlier document conditions. They might portend an utter collapse of the market, rule of law, basic services, and other elementals. The odds are that our "normal" mission is premised on the functioning of those adjunct but essential things. An agency (and its donor) must therefore heed the assessment's implications even if it points the mission in new directions.

k Inventory.

The Center has compiled a preliminary inventory of how civilians survive violence alone. It serves as a repository of hundreds of tactics, largely from the global South, which facilitators can consider as they build their own repertoire of ideas and actions for the modules. Perhaps they will rule out the first nine tactics as inapplicable then the tenth will look promising, get implemented—and go on to save many lives.

The inventory is organized along the same three strands of services, sustenance, and safety. Of course this taxonomy is just one of many plausible ways to organize the discussion. But it does reinforce the central point that the majority of people die preventable deaths due to the *disruptions* of markets and public services caused by violence. This means millions die nowhere near the shooting from threats that to some extent can be anticipated and prepared for.

> Millions die nowhere near the shooting from threats that can be foreseen and prepared for. Those preparations have been done before.

Self-protection is not a panacea, nor is it always easy to support. And yet, some of the basic tactics and strategies recorded in the inventory have by themselves saved millions of lives. This puts the value of a small investment into perspective. As Fred Cuny concluded, "It should be remembered that any preparedness activity, no matter how small, can have big results." [6]

This inventory is and will remain an open ledger. As an organic document, ideas are to be borrowed from it, and fresh ones entered into it (notably when each new **survey** takes stock of novel local capacities, reported or observed).

Implement

Concerns about perceived neutrality or about being in harm's way are addressed by the guidance on "working under the gun".

There is little new under the sun when it comes to transmitting information. Aid agencies are good at it and their existing methodologies are largely suitable for the task. Many non-formal community teaching methods can also be borrowed from the sister fields of disaster preparedness and landmine awareness education. But obviously hard issues arise when it comes to working amid violence and especially when working on something as sensitive as bracing for violence.

That sensitivity is at the heart of many issues covered in the **reflection paper**. It examined reasons that we seldom support local capacities for self-protection even as we praise them. Again, some of those reasons included beliefs that supporting local self-protection endangers our principles (neutrality, impartiality), puts expatriate and local staff in harm's way, or requires skills that we do not have. These beliefs can be omnipresent and influence whether and how preparations are implemented. The **reflection paper** confronts these and other mindsets that are either false and need to be debunked, or have some merit—yet are fixable.

The **facilitators' guide** suggests many such "fixes", particularly as it describes innovations for *working under the gun*. Capacity can be supported in a variety of ways and locations. When open discussion, demonstration or drill are too public for some to attend—that is there may be a fear of 'being seen as organizing'—then there are many more discreet alternatives, including night visits to homes of counterparts or community leaders. There is a range of choices in the "form and format" that facilitators can chose from. The old pedagogy, with us center stage openly proclaiming our work in "protection", has no place in preparedness support.

There are ways to "phase in and fold in" preparations so locals do not feel pushed and their abusers do not feel provoked. (A challenge of early warning work is that those at risk won't want to let it in, psychologically, and those at fault won't want to let it out.)

There are ways to "control the message" so locals neither underestimate nor overestimate risk—both of which are dangerous states of mind. There are also ways to "dress new messages in familiar clothing". A segue from preparedness to traditional aid rubric of vulnerable groups and community welfare is logical and leads to more benign points of entry. To some extent this involves speaking in euphemisms.

Threshold

The decision by an aid agency to pull back is a response to outlaw behavior. It should come at a threshold level of staff endangerment or aid manipulation that both expatriate leadership and local counterparts understand and agree to be intolerable. Under preparedness support doctrine, robust and inclusive preparations will have been triggered well before this threshold is reached. Under this doctrine, our local counterparts will have been revamped to survive violence and then to pivot and help local communities with their own self-preservation. This should all be well embedded in the agency's evacuation plan, contingency relocation or hibernation plan, and the continuity-of-mission plan known as "remote support".

Finance, monitoring, consultation and news / warning—all from a distance—give us unprecedented continuity of mission.

Remote Support

As a response to the dangers and loss of access that aid programs often face, remote support (at times called remote control and remote management) has come a long way. Yet far too often it still only amounts to a belated and ill-considered outsourcing of risks to local counterparts.

The **module menus** include information on "Physical safety for local service providers" and on "Deconstructing aid institutions" for lower profile work. Deconstruction entails flattening hierarchies and moving from static platforms to networks. Some describe it as work while "dissolving" into society. These ideas for conflict-adjusted aid architecture and field craft can leave local counterparts in charge of a safer and more effective aid vehicle.

But our support of them does not stop there. Another optional module is "Remote support (I): Continuing to aid your service area". It has four themes, each with a number of potential activities: (a) distance finance, (b) distance monitoring, (c) distance consultation, and (d) distance news/warning. With some strategic foresight all of these low-cost e-supports can be prearranged. As stated at the outset, all of these ideas help us achieve a continuity of mission such as we have rarely established before. They also, not incidentally, help our counterparts operate more safely alone than ever before—thus fulfilling on our part a duty of care that we have too often failed.

There will always be times when violence is such that even remotely-supported local providers cannot get help to unreached areas—and might even lose access to their own normal service area. Any populace which they had been able to support with preparations may fare reasonably, particularly if their communities have effective *wardens*. But there will also be times when violence is such that even those wardens cannot access neighboring communities and replicate preparedness support. The **module menus** therefore offer another module, this called "Remote support (II): Aiding unreached areas (LLAMA)".

LLAMA monograph

LLAMA stands for Locally Led Advance Mobile Aid.[7] It is deployed when civilians trapped in conflict are dying and the chances of reaching them in time with conventional relief and protection is unlikely. Its function is to help trained groups of locals return to conflict-affected areas to aid their own people. They bring resources and bolster local capacity. The groups are recruited, trained, and equipped either by (1) a sizeable single agency that is very comfortable with unconventional work, or (2) a free-standing consortium body created by agencies focused on the same crisis and urgently seeking ways to aid unreached areas.

LLAMA and preparedness support come from the same clay: they trust and support local capacity and rely on much of the same architecture and field craft. But as is detailed in The Center's monograph, LLAMA is very systematized and with deep doctrinal underpinnings (the monograph cites more than two thousand endnotes). It details a chain of supportive relationships from patrons to headquarters to training support units to deployed groups. One of its more novel aspects is its depiction of

> LLAMA includes methods for getting a "convoy in a backpack" and for "aid that grows in the field".

conflict zone aid with remarkable reach: methods for getting a "convoy in a backpack" and "aid that grows in the field".

With this increased sophistication comes greater reliance on security consultants and higher costs than are found in preparedness support. LLAMA needs to remain the *exception* to the rule. But then, circumstances in which people are trapped and dying with little chance of conventional rescue create the *exceptional* situation. There simply is no other innovation on the horizon of aid work or other protection missions to aid people in such deadly unreached areas.

Evaluation

A recent scoping study on measuring protection concluded that, "Despite continuous efforts to improve the ability to measure the success of protection activities, general agreement exists among experts that demonstrating what works in protection remains challenging." [8] We often fail to make it through the whole logframe, from inputs to activities and then on to demonstrating outcomes and impacts.

One could argue that inputs and activities which build *preparedness* are a prima facie good and a proxy for proof of lives saved. In this vein, citing what number of people were reached with life-saving messages by what number of teams and wardens and modules; what number of family asset protection plans, community risk reduction plans, and retrofitted service delivery plans were created through microgranting would all be recognized as a self-evident good.

In the fields of disaster risk reduction and preventive health we already extend indulgence with making attributions about results. We know they both work and we do not follow up with the recipient of every vaccination because—shots work. The activities cited in this paper are all boosters for psychological readiness and physical preparedness and to some degree inoculate people against violence. As Louise Pasteur said, "Chance favors the prepared mind."

The argument sounds good, but preparedness support also *has other* comparative advantages and other compelling methods of measurement when it comes to evaluation, as are noted next.

m & n Outcomes report & Learning Loop

Better *preparedness* helps agencies establish a point of departure for their later evaluations.

> Today's evaluations fail to capture a lot of what does and does not happen in protection which skews their accuracy.

Experience shows that a "lack of planning and the last-minute 'scramble for partners' leaves little time to capture baseline data." [9] An outcomes report run or contracted out by The Center has two advantages over conventional reports evaluating protection activity. The first is that it is grounded in a true baseline. And the second is that it is focused on measureable and attributable indicators.

Advantages in evaluation.

(1) *A true baseline*. Today's evaluations of protection are at times grounded in a baseline. But the evaluation proposed here is arguably much more accurate and accountable because of the baseline it looks at. The baseline examines not just physical safety but also far more impactful variables of sustenance and services which are *not always* factored in as "protection" per se.

Moreover, professional protection is now so rights-based that the abuse of rights has become our touchstone, our baseline. Too often this says more about victimhood than capacity. As said earlier, preparedness **survey tools** capture both the vulnerabilities and the capacities.

Lastly, research increasingly reveals that there are "serious disconnects" between our views of security and locals' views. Invariably this means they are undertaking many forms of self-protection that we are not recognizing, hence not recording. The resulting baselines and evaluations are failing to capture a lot of "what is happening in protection" which skews their accuracy.

Moreover, if evaluations are to be fearlessly accountable to donors and locals alike, then they should capture not just the commission of protection but also the omission of protection. Much of protection work is done in camp after displacement rather than in situ before displacement. Camp-based evaluation metrics capture life as it has become—not as it was. This amounts to reporting in a vacuum. What was the opportunity cost for neglecting to help brace locals for violence in situ earlier? Did the come-to-us option of aid and peacekeeping missions create a magnet or inducement with possibly even worse protection outcomes?

If we do not evaluate our failure act earlier and simply shift the timeframe of our baseline forward to life post-displacement, then we fail to be accountable and fail to take corrective action—both of which are vital functions of evaluation.

(2) *More measureable and attributable outcomes*. Many efforts in today's conventional protection repertoire are tied to behavioral change in individuals. They are also tied to civil, legal, political, juridical, institutional, even societal change. The scoping study cited above found that, "changing behavior and attitudes may take years, even decades. Efforts aimed at generating behavioral change will rarely produce results within a single project cycle of 12 to 18 months. Furthermore, attributing success is particularly difficult…" [10]

It can be hard to prove why a given change has occurred. And it can be hard to wait for that change, not just for operational and donor organizations that need a faster gauge of results if they are to make any tactical adjustments—but more importantly, hard for those in harm's way to wait for change. The central role that we have given to the *concepts* of "rights-holders" and "duty-bearers" often does not lend itself to measurement, neither with clarity nor with alacrity.

But it can be easier to measure and attribute outcomes of a physical nature. When the Khmer Rouge, Lord's Resistance Army, Interharme, or Islamic State come to one's village; when the Janjiwid, Boko Haram, Arkan's Tigers, or D'Aubuisson's death squads come to one's home, then the residents who are prepared will respond in tangible tactical ways. And the paramount measurements will be: did they get their family and assets out of harm's way—or did they not? Steps taken at the point-of-contact are decisive. But steps taken in many protection-of-civilians programs are not.

Types of evaluation. The results of preparedness are measured through longitudinal and latitudinal comparison. Longitudinal evaluation compares the *same people at different times*. It might look backward, comparing how people who have already faced violence are now faring after self-protective steps have been put in place. The gauge of impact would be change (reduction, hopefully) in the frequency of that violence. Because the pattern of violence has already been documented, observation of any changes to the baseline can begin immediately.

Or it might look forward, comparing the baseline of a time when violence was still just a threat to the time when violence arrives. The gauge of impact would be how much that baseline of human welfare and societal intactness is affected by the coming of violence. Obviously, this cannot be observed or evaluated until violence actually does arrive.

Whether enacting self-protective steps against the devil we have already met or the devil we hope never to meet, having a baseline is critical for understanding the changes that a group of people go through. But is also very insightful to compare them to *other* groups of people.

The latitudinal evaluation thus compares *different people at the same* time. This may remedy the question that stalks longitudinal evaluation: "Preparations are fine—but how do we really know things would have been worse *without* them?" This counterfactual question is addressed by comparing the welfare of those who took preparatory steps to the welfare of those in adjacent areas who did not. Upon comparison of otherwise similarly situated groups, who was better able to evade physical violence? Who was better able to obtain or devise life-critical sustenance and services?

* * * * *

An explanation of outcomes, especially in the netherworld of atrocities, is never certain. Attribution of results cannot be made with absolute confidence. But certainty and confidence are luxuries of the safe. We might hesitate to try preparedness support because we cannot anticipate all of its consequences. Our credo warns us to do nothing that might put them in harm's way. But nor should we leave them in harm's way. If ever there was a case for not making the perfect the enemy of the good, this is it.

> The residents who are prepared will respond in tangible tactical ways. And the paramount measurements will be: did they get their family and assets out of harm's way—or did they not?

Locals facing violence are not waiting for perfect answers, but they do want better ones. Those who live through violence having lost all earthly family and possessions face their own counter-historical question: "If we could go back in time, what would we do differently?" Invariably, if they could do it all over again they would act differently and act sooner. That is the defense of preparedness support in a sentence. Yesterday's experience can save lives today.

ENDNOTES

[1] *Improving the Evidence Base on Delivering Aid in Highly Insecure Environments*, Secure Access in Volatile Environments (SAVE), Briefing Note May 2016, Humanitarian Outcomes and Global Public Policy Institute; pp. 2 and 3.
[2] *World Disasters Report 2015: Focus on Local Actors, the Key To Humanitarian Effectiveness*, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva; p. 139.
[3] Frederick C. Cuny, *Disasters and Development*, Intertect Press, Dallas, Texas, 1994; p. 127.
[4] Abby Stoddard, et. al, *Once Removed: Lessons and Challenges in Remote Management of Humanitarian Operations for Insecure Areas*, Humanitarian Outcomes, London, 25 February 2010; p. 37."
[5] *Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, UN Security Council, S/2001/331, 30 March 2001; p. 12.
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[9] Lisa Schreter and Adele Harmer, *Delivering Aid in Highly Insecure Environments: A Critical Review of the Literature, 2007–2012*, Humanitarian Outcomes, London, 18 February 2013; p.29.
[10] Urban Reichhold and Andrea Binder, *Scoping Study: What Works in Protection and How do We Know?*, Global Public Policy Institute,, Berlin, March 2013; pp. 41-42.