8. PROTECTION NETWORKS FOR HRDS BASED IN RURAL AREA COMMUNITIES

THE SESSION

→ Building on the work of previous sessions, especially those dealt with in Chapters 5.2 and 5.6 of this Guide.

→ Finding sufficient space to conduct the session. Make sure that a sizeable room with plenty of wall space is available as you will need to display a large number of cards, flipcharts and other relevant materials.

→ Adjusting protection strategies in remote areas to the protection network approach.

→ Adapting the contents and concepts of the session to participants with low-level formal education; including some who are illiterate.

→ Taking into account the specific protection needs that women HRDs and any other relevant social category of HRDs (for example, indigenous populations, LGBTI defenders, disabled defenders, etc.) may have in terms of strategies, security norms, etc., both for routine protocols and emergency procedures.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

→ Strengthen collective capacities to deal with the risks faced by HRDs working with communities in rural areas.

→ Understand the dynamics of protection networks.

KEY MESSAGES

→ Collective security management in remote areas where inhabitants are scattered over large territories requires organisation and coordination.

→ Sharing the risk is easier if community bonds are strong.


THIS SESSION IS DESIGNED EXCLUSIVELY FOR GRASSROOTS COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONS. IT BUILDS ON CHAPTERS 5.1 TO 5.5 AND PROVIDES AN INTRODUCTION TO COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT FOR THESE HRD POPULATIONS.
# THE SESSION STEP BY STEP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Acc. time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Tool / method / materials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10'</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Introduction:</strong></td>
<td>Have the points ready on a flipchart*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60' 70'</td>
<td>• Objectives and structure of the session</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Security strategies and security measures</strong></td>
<td>Flipchart with risk scale</td>
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<td>• Review of risk analysis (15’)</td>
<td>Flipchart with RASER criteria of effective security strategy.</td>
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<td>• What is a security measure? What is a security strategy? (15’)</td>
<td>Flipchart with table of Security Measures (see below).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Activity 1: Designing security strategies (30’)</td>
<td>Blank flipcharts and markers. Use PI videos “Protection strategies” and “Security and protection objectives” for background info</td>
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<tr>
<td>140 210’</td>
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<td><strong>Protection networks.</strong></td>
<td>Telephone</td>
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<td>• Activity 2: Walking together exercise (30’)</td>
<td>Table</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Explain protection networks (30’)</td>
<td>Enlarged picture of protection network</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• First collective reflection on protection networks (10’)</td>
<td>Stickers/cards with the different elements of the protection network (arrows, Objective; Protection network committee; Analysis and Early Warning Commission; Our community; Other community; National Human Rights Institutions; National/ International support organisations; International institutions)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Activity 3: Social networks and fishing nets (20’)</td>
<td>Enlarged picture of a fishing net</td>
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<td>• Activity 4: Story(ies) about communities (15’) and final collective reflection on the story(ies) (35’)</td>
<td>Print-outs of the stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10’</td>
<td>220’</td>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TIME KEEPING: CALCULATE 240’ (4 HOURS), INCLUDING A 20’ BREAK**

*Laptop, projector and external speakers are optional although you may have difficulty in accessing power sources in remote areas.*
**LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

**RISK, SECURITY MEASURES AND STRATEGIES**

### REVIEW OF RISK ANALYSIS

Base this part of the session on the risk analysis that the participants carried out previously (see chapter 5.2 of this Guide). Remind participants of the results of the risk analysis by hanging the risk scale and the results of their previous work on this topic on the wall. Explain that security measures should be designed according to the results of the risk scale.

### WHAT IS A SECURITY MEASURE? WHAT IS A SECURITY STRATEGY?

The idea here is to provide participants with some examples of security strategies and security measures, adapted to community and individual needs. Hence, your intervention should be based on the methods and activities described in Chapter 5.6 of this Guide. In particular, point to the need to develop security strategies that allow HRDs to deal with risk while continuing to work and get on with their lives in a safe environment. Move on to present the six security strategies for dealing with risk (NPM, p. 67, and Guía Cuidándonos [not available in English] pp. 15-22).

→ One good approach to ensure a useful discussion when you explain the six strategies for dealing with risk is to ask participants whether they have used one of them in the past themselves. Although they might not have recognised them as such at the time, they might now realise that their reaction to a situation they faced in fact involved one of the strategies examined in this session. Depending on the time available, choose one or more of these ad hoc strategies and analyse them according to the RASER criteria.

→ You can also provide concrete examples of security strategies that appear in Guía Cuidándonos (pp. 104-111).

→ Conclude the activity by pointing out that when HRDs are threatened, stress-levels rise and HRDs feel the need to act quickly. However, analysing strategies according to the five criteria will help them choose effective strategies based on a long-term perspective.

### ACTIVITY: DESIGNING SECURITY STRATEGIES

Form as many groups as required to analyse the threats and security incidents that were identified previously (usually between two and four). Groups need to be more or less equal in size.

Each group analyses one threat or security incident (to simplify matters, you may group threats or security incidents that share similar patterns) and tries to come up with security strategies to address them. Give blank flipchart papers to each group and ask participants to copy the “Security Measures” table below and to fill it in for the case they have been assigned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific threats/security incident or patterns</th>
<th>Vulnerabilities</th>
<th>Capacities</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Timetable</th>
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After the groups have finished filling in the tables, bring the participants together in plenary and ask representatives from each group to stick their flipcharts up on the wall and present their work. Encourage the other groups to ask questions or to comment on the results. On the basis of the discussion, participants should either accept the security measures or propose new ones. Insist on the need to define priorities, assign responsibilities and agree on a realistic timetable.

PROTECTION NETWORKS

Before introducing the concept of protection networks, introduce the following exercise:

ACTIVITY 2: WALKING TOGETHER EXERCISE

This activity helps participants realise how difficult it is to walk together. Organisation and leadership are instrumental to good coordination.

Place a phone on a table in the centre of the room and ask participants to form two groups (of equal size).

Each group gathers separately, 10-metres apart from each other and from the phone. Tell each group that every participant must touch and hold the ear of a second participant and the knee of a third, forming a human knot. Then tell each group to move towards the phone, without letting go of each other, so they can make an emergency call.

If the groups let go without reaching the phone, give them another opportunity. Tell them to think about how they might be able to reach the phone without breaking the knot. The activity ends when one of the groups reaches the phone or when both let go for a second time. Pay attention to the difficulties that arise during their attempts to move as a group.

To sum the exercise up, engage the group in a collective reflection: ask participants how they felt during the activity and why they did or did not manage to reach the phone. If the groups do not mention it, explain that the knot symbolised a network. This knot makes it difficult to walk together (bring up some of the difficulties you observed). However, if they get organised and create a leadership model that brings them together, they will be able to move together, reach the phone to call for help.

→ Consider this activity as an energiser, but also relate it to security issues. Stress the importance of community cohesion for the management of security.

EXPLAIN HOW PROTECTION NETWORKS WORK (CUADERNO CUIDÁNDONOS P. 89-113).

Hang the enlarged picture, below, on the wall to illustrate the concept of protection networks.

Use the picture to describe how an ideal protection network would look. Place the cards/stickers with the different elements composing a protection network on and around the picture as you mention them (use the illustration in Guía Cuidándonos, p.97, for further guidance).

Explain what a protection network is (see the relevant Tip for Facilitators for guidance). The objective of protection networks is to protect HRDs working with communities/grass-roots organisations and to defend their territories (place the sticker covering the objective of protection networks on the picture).

Every community creates its own protection network committee (place the corresponding sticker by the big house in the bottom right hand corner of the large green area). The committee is responsible for the coordination and decision-making on matters of security and protection. It ensures that security measures are respected and monitors security and protection issues.
It is crucial to develop and maintain regular high quality communication with other organisations to ensure the protection of the community. This includes other communities, National Human Rights Institutions, national and international organisations and international bodies (place the corresponding stickers on the picture: the other communities are represented by the small green areas to the left of the main community; the other organisations should be placed at the ends of the red arrows).

Some members of the protection network committee should be appointed as liaison officers with these other organisations. Once the protection network is extended to other organisations, it should be possible to create a second coordination committee gathering all the actors who support the community. This is called the Analysis and Early Warning Commission (place the corresponding sticker by the circle with the people involved in a meeting). This commission is made up of a community representative (who is also a member of the protection network committee), and members of other communities and organisations. These persons should have good analytical skills and enjoy the trust of the community.

Three stages can be distinguished in the security management process of protection networks: a) information; b) analysis; c) decision-making. These stages should be followed at all three levels of security management: 1) the individual level; 2) the community level; and 3) in external coordination with other organisations or communities.

→ A. INFORMATION:
The community should make conscious efforts to gather information about what is happening in its territory and share it within the community, using effective channels of communication (refer to the blue arrows in the illustration).
B. ANALYSIS:
Based on this information the community should reach its own conclusions about the risk faced. This is the risk analysis stage. Remind participants of the context and risk analysis methods seen in the sessions based on chapters 5.1 and 5.2 of this Guide.

C. DECISION-MAKING:
Decisions on security measures should be made on the basis of the risk analysis. At the individual level, each community member should pay attention to the environment (remind participants of the session based on Chapter 5.4) and analyse the risks they face. All the information gathered should be communicated to the protection network committee. At the community level, each member is responsible for gathering information about threats and security incidents suffered by the community. This level is crucial, as this is where control over the territory is asserted. Again, the information gathered should be shared with the protection network committee, which will analyse it and take the necessary collective measures to protect the community and organise a response if needed. Finally, at the external level, the information gathered should be communicated to the Analysis and Early Warning Commission. This body carries out the global analysis and decides on the security measures and actions to be taken, if required. The community representative on the Commission communicates the analysis, information and alerts to the community.

The aim of protection networks is to protect HRDs working in rural communities and their workspace. The concept is based on the idea that protection, if it is to be effective, must originate in the community and/or grass-roots organisation themselves in order to ensure that all the efforts and activities that they carry out are brought together. Protection strategies and measures aimed at ensuring the safety of inhabitants/members are thus embedded in the defence of their territory, which is defined in political and geographical terms.

Protection networks may be described as collective efforts/responses within the community, and between the community and other external organisations, to respond to the risks – and repression – they face as a result of their actions in the defence of their human rights.

Effective organisation is at the heart of protection networks.

FIRST COLLECTIVE REFLECTION ON PROTECTION NETWORKS
After this rather conceptual section on protection networks, participants should be encouraged to discuss and reflect on protection networks, explaining the concepts again if necessary. Facilitators may use real life experiences to illustrate the explanations (the Guía Cuidándonos includes a number of cases from Latin America).

The discussion might arrive at the following conclusions:
Protection networks are useful for:

- Get to know and analyse the information that communities require to protect their territory.
- Share this information.
- Be able to develop judgements and take decisions to protect the community.
- Seek alliances with others who share the same goals.
- Carry out joint actions.
- Resist.
Once the discussion seems complete, move on to the following activities, which can help you further illustrate the concept of protection networks:

**ACTIVITY 3: COMPARISON BETWEEN SOCIAL NETWORKS AND FISHING NETS**

It is not always easy to explain exactly what is meant by networks. While it is true that the concept is intuitive – which helps when it comes to explaining them – the very familiarity of the idea makes it more difficult to go more deeply into the question. To simplify the matter it can be helpful to compare networks with fishing nets.

→ **INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY AS FOLLOWS:**

We have seen that protection networks are made up of individuals and organisations that maintain regular contact between themselves to share information, take decisions and act on protection matters that are of interest to their members. Networks do not always announce themselves as such. When we speak of networks we are referring to all the interactions between individuals and organisations – interactions that can take place in many different ways and at a variety of levels.

→ **ENCOURAGE THE PARTICIPANTS TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSION:**

Stick a large illustration of a fishing net on the wall. Ask the participants what is most important: the threads or the knots? Listen to the answers and note down them down without saying anything. Then, initiate a comparison between fishing nets and social networks. Ask participants if what they have said about fishing nets applies also to social networks. At this point feel free to point out any aspects that the participants have missed (See Tips for Facilitators).

The answer to the question about what is more important, the threads or the knots: the logical answer is: both. Without knots, threads are just threads and there is no net. On the other hand it is impossible to tie a knot if you don’t have thread. It could also be said that nets vary according to how far apart the knots are or, put differently, how large the mesh is. If the knots are too far apart the net is no good for fishing because all the fish can escape. In the social sphere, to pursue the comparison, it could be said that if there are only a few people or organisations in a network (few knots) and they don’t maintain much contact (few threads) then the social network will not be very strong.

Elements that will help draw conclusions from the discussion: just as a strong net means you can fish more successfully, a strong, well structured, network will be better able to work together. If you have to catch big fish then you will need a strong net. A weak net will break easily. The same is true of communities: if the opponent is big and strong a small, weak, community will not be able to confront it and will break before it achieves its objectives. But just as different communities can come together to make themselves strong so you can making a fishing net using different threads, or increase the number of knots to make it stronger and catch bigger fish.
ACTIVITY 4: STORY(IES) ABOUT COMMUNITIES

This activity is intended to help participants understand 1) the weaknesses and strengths of protection networks and 2) how protection networks contribute to making communities stronger. The guide contains a fictional account of a situation commonly faced by communities (see Annex of this Chapter below). However, facilitators are encouraged to be creative and to make their own stories up, adapting them to local experiences and contexts. But they are also advised to be very careful to avoid any possibility that participants might feel allusions have been made that could interfere with the development of the workshop.

If you decide to use only one story you should distribute copies and ask one of the participants to read it aloud. If you use two stories divide the participants into two groups. Each group should meet and one person should read one of the stories out loud after which the groups discuss a series of questions posed by the facilitator. After the group work is over, each group should read its story out loud to the plenary and feedback on its discussion, giving the members of the other group the opportunity to express their views. The session ends when both plenary discussions are complete.

Use the following questions to guide these reflections (See Tips for Facilitators):

→ Which aspects of a protection network is this story relevant to?
→ How might a protection network have been useful to the community in this story?

→ Which aspects of a protection network is this story relevant to? Among others the following could be mentioned: the community had no access to information about the plans to build the highway; it had no contacts in the local town to inform them of their opposition; they believed it would be enough just to send a written communication; when they met together once the excavators had arrived they did not work together; the few who did act were detained; the community made no preparations for the return of the excavators; they had no early warning system; they had no contacts they could inform that the excavators had returned, etc.

→ How might a protection network have been useful to the community in this story? Find out more about the construction project; analyse the situation; define protection measures; decide on representatives to deal with the problem; coordinate their actions; establish an early warning system; establish prior contact with individuals or communities who might be allies (for example the priest or the community 15 km away); etc.

CONCLUSION

> Ask the participants to restate the key elements of the session and clarify questions or concerns.

> Show participants how a comprehensive security strategy builds on insights drawn from the previous sessions and stages of the security management process.

> Ask participants whether they think protection networks are useful in helping them deal with the risks they face.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This is the story of a small community of some 200 families who lived in a mountainous area at the entry to a valley a few kilometres away from the settlement. Historically, this area had been crossed by the routes that linked the mountainous regions to the valley; indeed, there is still an old dirt track there.

One day the mayor of the community was notified that the regional government was planning to construct a highway that would pass through the middle of the community. This would require the compulsory purchase of lands in the centre of the community, equivalent to half its territory. The inhabitants of the community were seriously worried by the news. They would lose their lands and the money received in compensation would not be enough to enable them to start their lives again elsewhere. Furthermore, they were unwilling to leave a place that had been in the hands of their families for generations. Those living higher up in the mountains realised that the highway would affect the community in many ways and that their lives would never be the same again. The community decided, therefore, to oppose the construction of the road. There was also an alternative route available that would take the highway around the mountains and along an uninhabited valley. But this would be more expensive and would take longer to construct, reducing profits for the construction firm.

The mayor, who had been in post for many years, began to represent the interests of the community and organised a meeting with some of the inhabitants to discuss what to do. Everyone was very angry and they decided to prepare a note of protest and send it to the regional government. After six months no progress had been made. By this time some families had received an official letter informing them that they had to leave their properties in exchange for an unspecified compensation payment.

One day, the inhabitants saw that two large mechanical excavators and five lorries had arrived, protected by a group of security guards from a private security firm. This was how they realised that work was about to begin and that their letter of protest had been ignored. The entire community met together urgently and 10 or so of the angriest amongst them proposed confronting the workers and forcing them to leave. The rest of the community vacillated because they were afraid of the security guards and because it was first time they had ever faced a situation like this. The angry group decided they could not waste any time and they decided to stand in the way of the machines. There was a fight with the security guards during which three of the inhabitants and two of the guards were injured. In the end, the machinery and the guards left the community, much to the celebration of its inhabitants. After two further weeks during which nothing else happened the community began to recover its air of calm.

Early one morning, the machines returned but this time they were escorted by 40 security personnel armed with pistols and accompanied by dogs. The excavators got down to work immediately. The community had not considered how it might react to this situation. The mayor and some of the individuals who had led the action the last time were not there because they were members of a small cooperative and were in town on business. As the machines began to work the security guards walked around the community detaining several of the people who had attacked them on the previous occasion (they were accompanied by one of the guards who had been attacked, who pointed these people out). When a group of women went up to the guards and asked where they were taking the men, they answered simply that they were going to teach them a lesson. Nobody knew what to do until someone thought of telling the priest whom they had seen yesterday on his way to another community some 15 km away. But no one was sure whether the priest had already left for another community further to the north. At dusk the excavators left, along with the guards. That same evening the members of the community formed a small commission which set off for the nearest town, intending to speak to the police and find out where their neighbours had been taken. The mayor returned at nightfall and once he had been told about what had happened, he called a meeting for first thing the next morning.