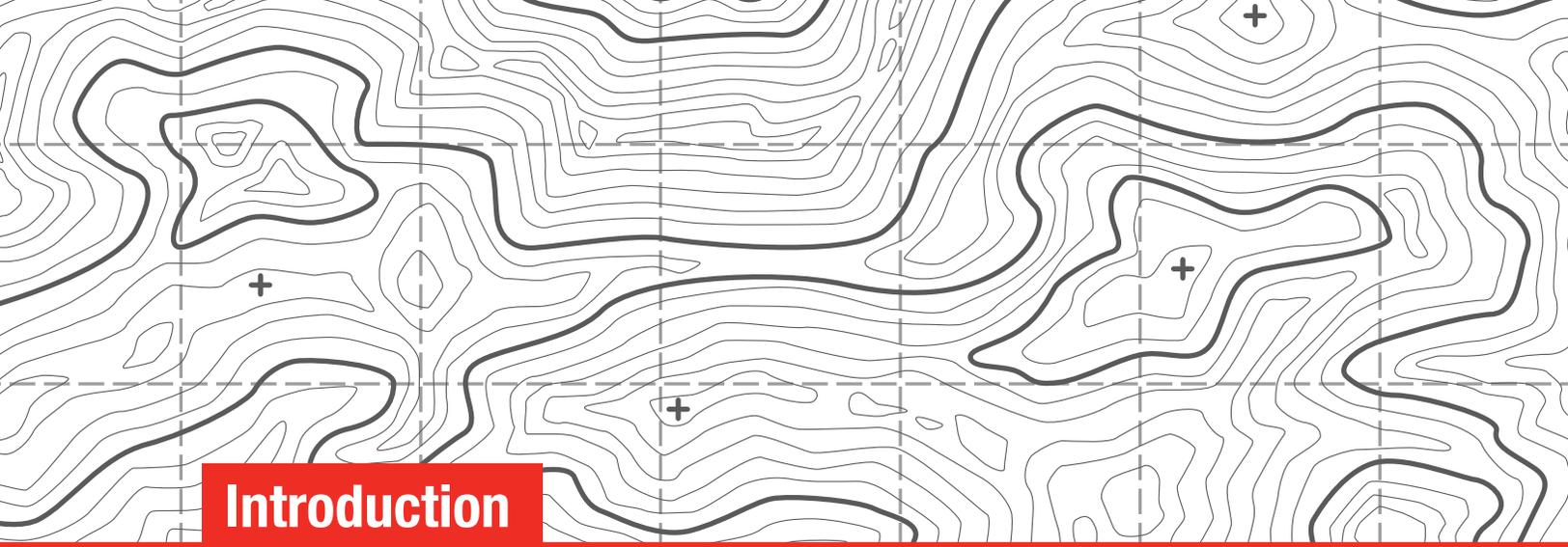


PROTECTING TOGETHER

Preventing, Mitigating, and Addressing Civilian Harm

Advocacy Guide





Introduction

In 1999, the UN Security Council came together to pass [resolution 1265](#), urging states to better protect civilians in armed conflict, and to better account for and remedy harm experienced by civilians in war. In each of its annual reports on the protection of civilians since, the Secretary General has called attention to issues of enduring and emerging concern, but also highlighted innovations in state practice and the work of non-governmental organizations that together have measurably improved the protection of civilians. The record demonstrates that states regularly fall severely short in efforts to protect civilians and to answer for harm, and yet progress is possible when states make and follow through on a commitment to develop the policies and practices needed to better prevent and respond to harm. Achieving a higher local and global standard of protection through improved state policy and practice will require civil society to work together based on a common assessment of needs, and a shared agenda for promoting change.

The Toolkit for Advancing the Protection of Civilians in Conflict (the “toolkit”) represents an effort to distill two decades of analysis, practice, and consensus about how states and security forces can better protect civilians into a greatly simplified framework that can be used by organizations from any sector in any place in the world. Drawn from CIVIC’s practical experience, the insights from two decades of Secretary General’s reports, guidance on interpreting international humanitarian law, and practical guidance from organizations working on protection in conflict-affected areas, the toolkit aims less to forge new ground than to identify the most important end states and ways to achieve them.

The “toolkit” includes two parts:

- 1** An **evaluation framework** that can be used to measure progress against a set of practical objectives and end-states that signify the state’s commitment to better prevent and respond to harm.
- 2** An **advocacy guide** that summarizes the steps in developing an advocacy strategy specific to protecting civilians.

Among other ways the two resources – the “toolkit” – can be used:

- To enable civil society from different sectors to focus on specific aspects of state practice or areas of concern in countries experiencing conflict or recovery from conflict.
- To provide representatives from civil society a common basis for promoting a comprehensive set of policies and practices for protecting civilians *before conflict occurs*.
- To unite representatives from global civil society through a common set of practical objectives and a shared vocabulary that can be used to advance the protection of civilians today and in the future.



I. Using the Evaluation Framework

The Evaluation Framework is designed to help assess a state's commitment to protect civilians by evaluating policy and practice across four main categories and at various stages of a conflict.

1. National Commitment and Enabling environment:

A the national system of laws, policies, and other political indications of government support for the success of protection of civilian practices. This category also includes the conditions necessary for ensuring security forces are accountable to national level policies, and that government activities are transparent and subject to public oversight, to include civil society engagement.

2. Preventing and Mitigating Harm:

The measures taken during planning and operations to prevent harm and to mitigate harm that occurs in the course of operations or as a result of presence and activities.

3. Civilian Harm Response (Reporting, Investigations, Tracking, and Recording):

The systems and procedures in place to detect, investigate, and track civilian harm.

4. Amends and Reparations:

The means by which the state ensures appropriate and effective redress for harms that result from unlawful conduct, as well as the discretionary amends, including monetary and non-monetary expressions of condolence.

Each category also provides up to five “illustrative indicators”, or desired end-states that together constitute a meaningful reflection of a state's performance in that category. The indicators presented in this framework derive from a recurring emphasis in several authoritative sources of guidance on the protection of civilians and have been validated by the experts consulted for this toolkit. Although they are meant to provide a common basis for evaluating state practice, the indicators are by no means exhaustive of the measures states and their security forces should or can take to protect civilians. The user can determine if the indicators provided can be supplemented by additional, different, or more specific indicators or even replaced altogether. Moreover, the user may elect to focus on specific categories, rather than all of them. Finally, the evaluation framework provides the user with a notional basis for assessing the level of a state's commitment for each set of indicators, from being a “leader” in protecting civilians to being “regressive” and acting in ways that are contrary to the interest of protecting civilians.

Two approaches:

- 1 The framework can be used by the user or a coalition of users to identify ways to adapt state practice to better address one or more observable forms of harm or practices that create the risk of harm.

(1) Assessment of needs based on observable phenomena:

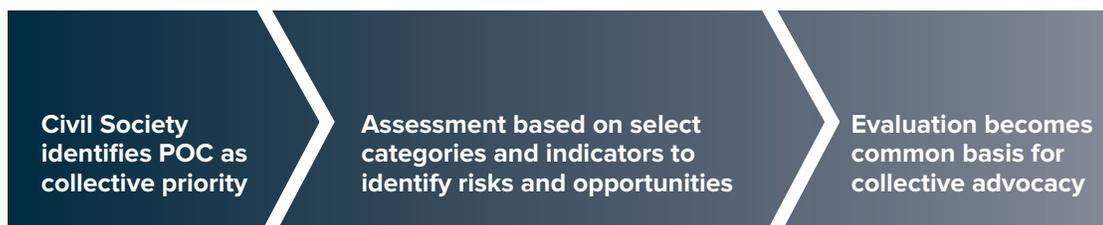


EXAMPLE

Civil society organizations that work on peacebuilding activities observe that civilians in areas where they work are commonly affected by security operations (such as curfews), whereas in other parts of the country, CSOs that focus on human rights are concerned that civilians are unable to report the harm they have experienced resulting from security operations in their area. Using the Evaluation Framework, a group of CSOs together identify the most important contributing factors and develop a clear set of shared priorities that all can promote regardless of sector.

- 2 At any time prior to, or even amidst a state's involvement in conflict, the framework can be applied to understand where gaps in state practice may present risks for civilians; or, conversely, to demonstrate leading practice in the protection of civilians in one or more categories - whether that state or its security forces ever enters a conflict or not.

(2) Evaluation of gaps and opportunities:



EXAMPLE

Several countries are actively planning to bolster the presence of international forces in an ad hoc coalition in partnership with local security forces to combat an armed opposition group. Civil society organizations use the evaluation framework to identify the most critical risks that stem from the status quo, and opportunities for the coalition to prevent and respond to harm.

Because the framework is designed to assess state practice as a comprehensive framework of mutually reinforcing measures, the evaluation framework is **most useful for addressing multiple observable phenomena or developing advocacy strategies that cover more than one category.**

Once the basic approach has been determined, the evaluation framework can be used in one of several ways, depending on the local needs and context:

- 1. As the Basis for a Measurement Tool or Scoring Rubric:** Civil society can borrow from the categories and indicators to develop a tool by which state practice can be scored at the national, geographic, or thematic levels. To use the framework as a scoring tool, the user can select the relevant categories and indicators and assign values to each (e.g 5 or 10 points) and develop a score sheet for tabulating a final “score”. By “scoring” the state or its security forces, civil society can identify the areas most in need of additional attention in their advocacy efforts.

EXAMPLE

Humanitarian and human rights NGOs use the evaluation to “score” the policies and doctrine of a state and its security forces on a scale of 100 (25 points possible for each of four selected categories) to gauge the overall commitment of the national government on the protection of civilians and to identify both gaps and areas of opportunity.

- 2. As the Basis for Comparative Evaluation:** Users can use the evaluation tool to conduct comparative evaluation of state practice by one state relative to other states, or to compare state practice in certain geographies relative to others. Using common indicators and a consistent methodology for gauging practice, the user can identify relative strengths and weaknesses, and focus advocacy efforts on areas of greatest concern.

EXAMPLE

Civil society organizations from four different countries work together, using indicators from the evaluation tool and the “sample leadership levels” to conduct a comparative evaluation of state practice and to identify states that can be seen as “leaders” in certain categories - and those that are clearly “uncommitted” in others - in order to promote a higher standard of practice across all of them.

- 3. As the basis for qualitative or targeted evaluation:** Users can also use the evaluation framework in part or in whole as one of many resources available to conduct an independent, targeted analysis of one or more aspects of state practice.

EXAMPLE

An NGO coalition decides to assess the government’s policy and practice on investigating and providing amends for credible claims of civilian harm. Drawing from the assessment framework and references from the bibliography, the coalition conducts a qualitative assessment and produces a report with policy recommendations.



II. Advocacy Guide for Preventing and Responding to Civilian Harm

Over the past twenty years, civil society has played an increasingly important role in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. This guide provides civil society with resources for developing an advocacy strategy based on deliberate and unified tactics and strategies for improving the prevention and response to civilian harm in their own context and environment.

The guide is divided into seven sections, each representing one of the steps towards the development of a theory of change (i.e. an explanation of why a problem is important and how a set of activities will lead to a desired outcome) and an effective advocacy strategy. Each section also contains helpful insights about what makes each step different when it comes to the protection of civilians.

The guide includes short sections, along with illustrations and examples for:

- 1** Identifying the problem
- 2** Assessing the Context
- 3** Self-assessment
- 4** Setting clear goals and objectives
- 5** Managing risk
- 6** Developing an action plan
- 7** Evaluating progress

1

Identifying the Problem: Two Approaches

The method and approach taken by civil society to promote a higher standard of protection depends greatly on the local circumstances in which advocacy will take place. Among the possible situations appropriate for developing an advocacy strategy for preventing and mitigating harm to civilians:

- a. States actively involved in conflict in the territory of other states
- b. States where military forces regularly conduct internal security operations and/or where the state competes with armed opposition groups for control over territory.
- c. States that may become involved in an armed conflict or in efforts to counter armed opposition groups at some time in the future.
- d. States that play host to humanitarian organizations in the context of an armed conflict.
- e. States that provide security assistance or transfer arms to other countries

The first step of developing a strategy is to identify the scope of the problem or the gap worth addressing and understanding the proximate cause and contributing factors. The method of determining the scope depends on if the objective is to address a currently observable phenomenon or problem (e.g., civilian harm), or to prevent a problem or gap from emerging in the future by identifying gaps.

a. **Problem Identification Approach 1** **Observable Phenomena: Guiding Questions**

Developing the problem statement from observable harm can be achieved by identifying the problem and the possible causes and contributing factors.



What is the problem?

- What harms or issues are civilians experiencing?
- Where is harm occurring (or in what circumstances/environment)?
- Does the harm affect some people more than others?
- Is the problem getting better in any place relative to others?
- What is the corresponding category of protection?



What factors contribute to the problem?

- Who is responsible for the harm or lapses in response?
- What factors affect the conduct or practice leading to harm or inadequate response?
- What factors explain differences in the experience of civilians?

**b. Problem Identification Approach 2
Finding Gaps and Opportunities: Guiding Questions**

Where the goal is to ensure that policy and practice are optimally designed to prevent and respond to harm (e.g. operations are being planned or are in progress where harm has not yet occurred, but the risk of harm is great), identifying the scope of the problem may require different or additional questions:



What are the gaps?

- What harms have been observed as a result of gaps in the past?
- What harms may occur if policy or practice is not adapted?
- Where, or under what circumstances, is harm likely to occur?
- Who is most likely to experience harm?



What factors lead to the gaps?

- What omissions in policy or practice increase the risk of harm or inadequate response to harm?
- What current practice, if not adapted, aggravates the risk of harm or inadequate response?
- What factors contribute to the current state of practice?

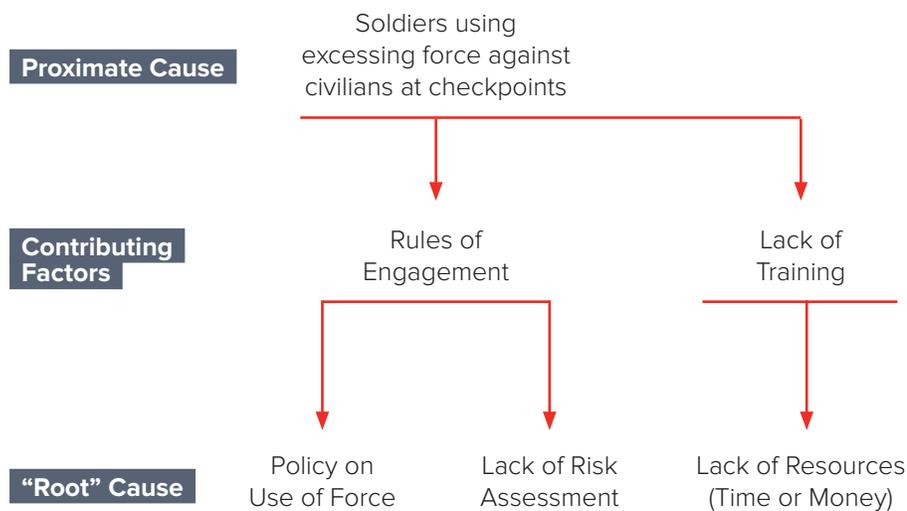
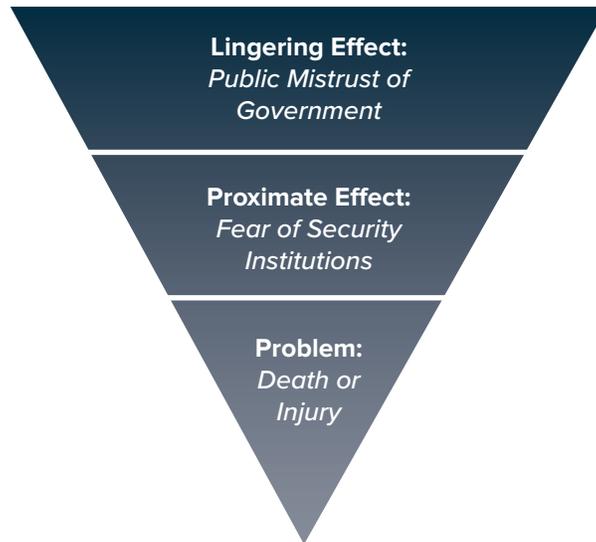
Whether the goal is to address observable phenomena or to fill gaps before harm occurs, the **Evaluation Framework for Civilian Harm Prevention and Response** can provide a meaningful set of baseline indicators to assess the extent to which state policy and practice serve to mitigate or to aggravate harms, and a starting point for identifying and recommending solutions. In cases of observable harm, **the problem is assessed first**, and then the Evaluation Framework for Civilian Harm Prevention and Response can be used to help identify potential solutions and advocacy priorities. In cases of gap analysis, the Evaluation Framework can be used **first to conduct a baseline survey of policy and practice**.

Table 1: Applying the Evaluation Framework: Illustrative Questions

APPROACH 1: Observable Harm	APPROACH 2: Gaps and Opportunities
Does the problem relate to a failure to prevent harm from occurring or a gap in the response to harm?	What is the context in which the need to prevent or respond to harm is most likely to feature?
Which categories and subcategories of civilian harm prevention and response are most closely related?	Which categories and subcategories are most relevant to the context in which gaps should be addressed or opportunities realized?
What information is available for evaluating the cause and effect of harm?	What information is available for evaluating policy and practice?
Which indicators are most closely related to the harm, and in what ways do the absence of certain indicators or failures to meet “desired end states” affect the occurrence or pervasiveness of harm?	How far does the object of evaluation (e.g. the state or armed actor) go in meeting the desired end states in each of the relevant categories and subcategories?
What factors most directly relate to current state of the identified indicators? (e.g. commanders refrain from consulting communities because no channels exist to do so)	What factors most directly affect the current state of policy and practice with respect to indicators and end-states?

ILLUSTRATION 1

A tool for conducting problem analysis, commonly used by advocacy organizations and coalitions, is the “Problem Tree”¹ (which can later be used to identify solutions.) The Problem Tree provides a means to identify the problems, and their effects, as well as both causes and root causes.



1 This section draws its inspiration heavily from the Problem Tree used in English, Richard. “Influencing for Impact Guide: How to deliver effective influencing strategies.” Oxfam, September 2020. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/influencing-for-impact-guide-how-to-deliver-effective-influencing-strategies-621048/>.

2

Assessing the Context:

Developing an effective strategy for promoting the changes necessary to address the causes and effects of problems or to fill gaps also depends on understanding the context in which the advocacy strategy will be implemented, which includes both the identification of those external factors that enable or constrain change, and an assessment of those with the power and influence to either resist or implement change.

a. Enablers and Constraints:

Just as a range of factors may serve as the root cause to a problem or gap, so too can a range of environmental factors either enable or constrain the effectiveness of advocacy in promoting change. Each organization or coalition can determine which categories of environmental factors are most important to consider, including political, institutional, or cultural and social.

Table 2: Context Analysis (Opportunities and Constraints)

Factors		Opportunities (examples)	Constraints (examples)
Political		Political transitions (in leadership or party), or new legislative calendars	Low political cost to maintaining status quo
Institutional		Culture of meaningful civic engagement	Institutional distrust of civil society or the public on security issues
Cultural/Social		Popular public mandate for prevention or response	Ethnic or cultural divisions in which protection concerns affecting one group or identity are marginalized
Environmental/Contextual		Civilian harm incidents call attention to need for reforms	Terrorist attack creates widespread support for aggressive response or harmful policies
Communications		Consistent media coverage of conflict/security issues	Restrictions on media coverage, low media coverage
External		Opportunities to demonstrate leadership on protecting civilians within international forums	Competition from other international issues/priorities



Guiding Questions for Assessing Important Opportunities and Constraints:

- Which factors (5 or 6) are most important and directly related to the ability to change policy or practice relating to the problem statement?
- How do they relate to the problem statement or the ability to address it?
- Are there any trends or changes to these factors that are important to consider? What are they?

b. Stakeholder Mapping

Fundamental to understanding the context for an advocacy strategy is understanding the range of stakeholders affected by the issue, and the power dynamics involved with change.

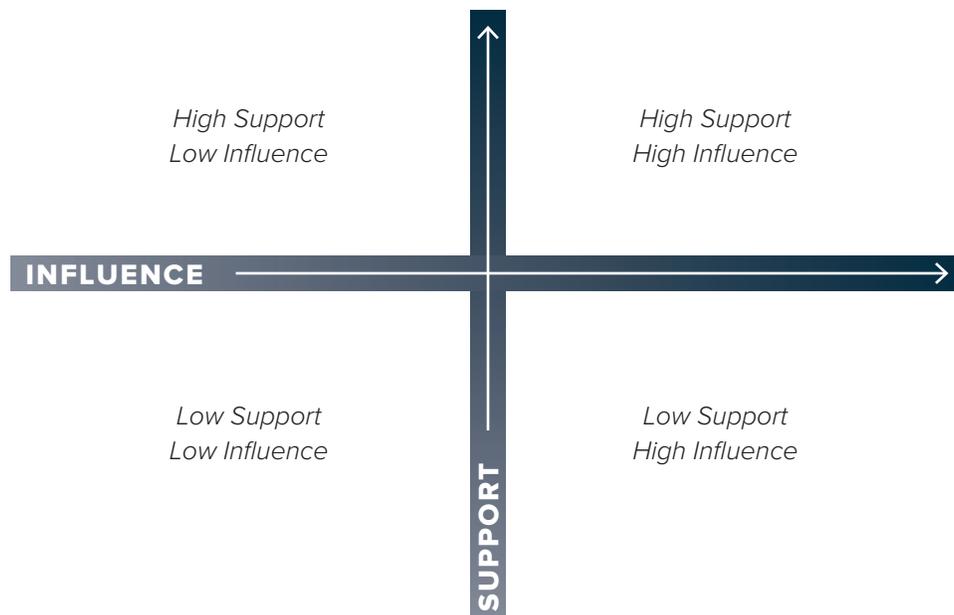
A first step might involve developing an inventory by **level and nature of interest**:

- **Primary stakeholders:** those directly involved with and affected by the issue (decision-makers, civilians, or communities), and the extent of their support or opposition to the advocacy goal.
- **Secondary stakeholders:** those who are indirectly involved or affected, but have an interest (those who influence decisionmakers, other CSOs who share some degree of interest in preventing and responding to civilian harm), and the nature of their support or opposition to the advocacy goal.²

The next step involves understanding the degree to which the party has any **influence or power** to affect the outcome.

Many approaches to developing advocacy strategies involve segmenting those with decision-making power into the nature of support or opposition and the level of power they hold in affecting the outcome to identify known champions, “fence-sitters” (or uncommitted either way), and opponents, e.g.³

ILLUSTRATION 2: POWER DYNAMICS/STAKEHOLDER MATRIX



2 This approach draws from CARE International. “The CARE International Advocacy Handbook.” May 2014. <https://www.care-international.org/what-we-do/advocacy-1>.

3 See the excellent matrix used in English, Richard. “Influencing for Impact Guide: How to deliver effective influencing strategies.” Oxfam, September 2020. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/influencing-for-impact-guide-how-to-deliver-effective-influencing-strategies-621048/>.

3

Setting Goals and Objectives

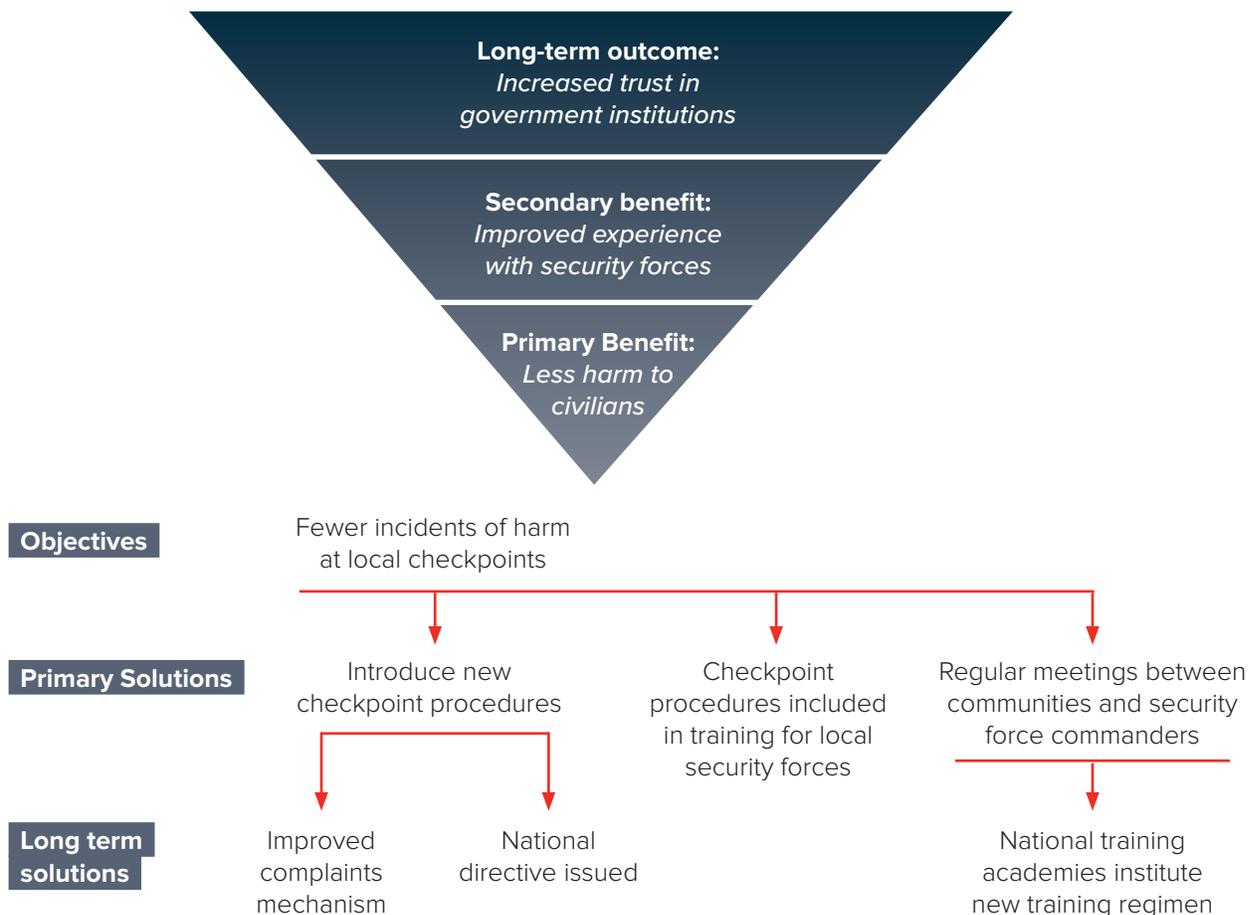
Fundamental to all effective advocacy strategies is the articulation of clear advocacy goals and objectives.

According to one source, a goal is the “broader vision of the future that you want to bring about,” and the objective is “a more specific change which you can assess over time”.⁴ Goals and objectives should contain certain attributes that allow for the evaluation of progress and the success of the advocacy strategy overall. The goals and objectives in a strategy for advancing the prevention and response to civilian harm may differ depending on the specific context, but like goals and objectives in any kind of advocacy strategy, they should be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timebound.⁵

Solution Trees:

A “solution tree” is one way of identifying goals and objectives and can also be useful for identifying pathways for making change through advocacy activities. A solution tree essentially inverts the causes and effects of a problem tree into solutions and their outcomes. To develop a solution tree, start by conceptualizing the ideal end-state(s) corresponding to each effect caused by the problem you wish to solve.

ILLUSTRATION 3: DESIGNING A SOLUTION TREE



4 <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/evidence-messages-change-introductory-guide-successful-advocacy>
 5 (Oxfam uses Clear Trackable, Plausible, and Timebound, and CARE suggests Important, Achievable, Sellable, Added Value, Organizational Fit).

Setting Goals and Objectives: What's Different About Civilian Harm Prevention, Mitigation, and Response?

Like other agendas, the civilian harm prevention and response agenda may include goals and objectives relating to both the proximate cause or contributing factors leading to the problem or gap. Civilian harm prevention, mitigation, and response often involves variables that are specific to the effect of armed actors on communities or to the way security institutions are governed, organized, or operate. Some variables will be easy to measure and observe, others will be harder to measure and more difficult to observe. In some cases, the most difficult to observe or measure can be the most meaningful, and vice versa.



Measurable and observable:

- Laws
- National policies
- Security practices



Measurable and at times observable:

- Doctrine
- Tactics and procedures
- Training and education
- Resource allocations
- Institutional capacity or proficiency



Harder to measure, more difficult to observe:

- Attitudes and beliefs
- Institutional Culture
- Receptivity to influence

Identifying goals and objectives may derive from the highest priorities, the greatest degree of feasibility (within your capacity and timeframe), and the specific strengths of your organization or coalition.

A good strategic plan will anticipate the benefit of monitoring progress by including a set of indicators by which progress - and the advocacy strategy's contribution - can be assessed (see Table 4.)

Table 4: Charting Objectives, Indicators, and Outcomes

Advocacy Goal 1: Improve government responsiveness to claims of harm from civilians

Advocacy Goal 2: Limit the negative side-effects of military operations on civilians

Objectives (Desired Results)	Intermediate Objectives (Intermediate Desired Results)	Indicators	Example of Tracked Outputs and Outcomes
<p>Civilians affected by military operations in the Northeast Sector receive meaningful offers of condolence for harm in at least 75% of credibly reported cases.</p> <p><i>(Evaluation Framework Illustrative Indicator 4.1)</i></p>	<p>The military institutes a policy and procedure for providing condolence payments in the Northeast Sector.</p>	<p>Number of specific and meaningful actions taken by the government in response to harm.</p>	<p>Parliament accepts NGO coalition advice for developing a legislative proposal.</p> <p>The military publicly commits to considering a new procedure.</p>
<p>Reported disruptions to local commerce from checkpoints are reduced by 50% in at least two regions.</p> <p><i>(Evaluation Framework Illustrative Indicator 2.4)</i></p>	<p>Feedback from military consultations with communities leads to changes in practice at checkpoints.</p>	<p>Number of specific and meaningful actions taken to mitigate harm.</p>	<p>On the recommendation of the NGO coalition, military agrees to meet with community leaders from two regions.</p> <p>Community leaders and civil society agree to 3 specific recommendations for changes at checkpoints as a result of a meeting recommended by the NGO coalition.</p>

4

Self-Assessment

Successful advocacy strategies align means with ends. The prospects of success depend not only on external factors that enable or inhibit results, but also the extent to which your organization and coalition have the capacity and configuration to effectively advance the advocacy agenda.

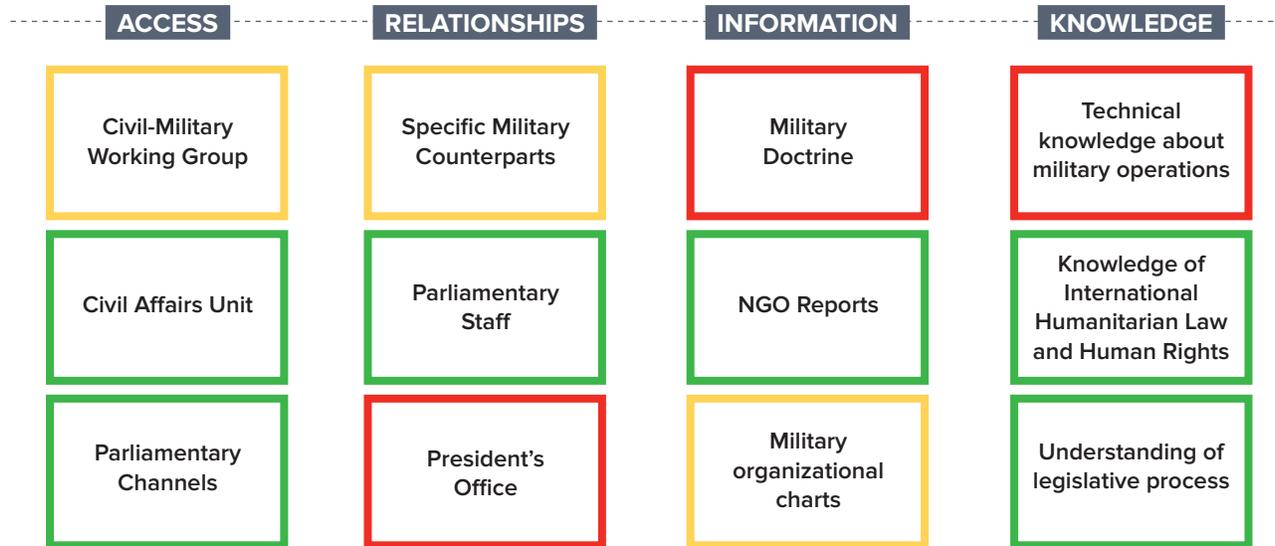
Table 5: Self-Assessment of Capabilities and Resources

Category	Example
Access	Established channels – such as coalition/cross-organization working groups – for meeting with government officials. Dedicated points of contact within government for engaging on civilian harm prevention and response.
Information	Public records and information about policies and practices (e.g., military manuals or reports from the government). Privately/independent research or analysis of institutions or phenomena (e.g., a policy brief by a think tank on Defense policy).
Influence	Recognized authority with an established record of affecting legislation or policy.
Relationships	Contacts and working relationships with key stakeholders, to include decisionmakers and affected communities and those with insights or information that can be shared
Knowledge	Technical expertise and knowledge relating to government or security policy and practice. Technical expertise and knowledge in the field of civilian protection.
Voice/Name Recognition	Established record of public and private advocacy on civilian harm prevention and response and/or related issues
Time	Time available to advance a strategy
Resources	Funding, space, other logistical requirements. People with requisite skills and time to support.
Unity or Consensus	Shared vision of goals and objectives. Shared definitions. Efficient coordination.
Acknowledgement of Biases and Comparative Advantages	Recognizing comparative advantages and implicit and explicit biases

The process of self-assessment is useful both before developing an advocacy strategy, and in determining what capabilities or strengths should be developed to better make progress toward the organization's objectives.

ILLUSTRATION 4: SELF-ASSESSMENT EXAMPLE

A self assessment can be graphically depicted to help identify strengths and weaknesses.



5

Risk Management

Civil society organizations and even coalitions face several risks in carrying out their work, from financial risks to the risks involved with operating in environments that impose limitations or constraints on civil society altogether. CSOs should conduct risk assessments to determine possible outcomes or responses of government or local authorities to advocacy plans and the impact of such response on the organization's work, safety of staff and clients and the organization's survivability.⁶

Risk Management: What's Different About Civilian Harm Prevention and Response?

Conducting advocacy relating the prevention and response to harm may involve additional risks to organizations or their intended beneficiaries that derive from the sensitivity of the subject matter or the involvement of armed actors, the proximity to conflict areas, or the kinds of information that are involved.

Considerations:

While not an exhaustive list, organizations may want to take the following into consideration in developing a risk mitigation plan.



Choice of message and medium: Strategies that rely on adversarial messaging can be highly effective in certain environments, especially where security is perceived as a public good subject to public oversight and appropriate for scrutiny and where the government may be sensitive and responsive to valid critique. Elsewhere, CSOs or coalitions may face government reprisals or negative public reactions. In these cases, CSOs can consider reframing messages to align with those societal or institutional values that are likely to influence behavior, engaging through private channels to develop confidence and trust; working through grassroots movements; focusing on positive and solutions-based messages; and even using creative forms of art or multimedia.



Security planning: CSOs should have a security plan that adequately covers relevant risks, to include digital risk management (including responsible data management and encryption, secure information technology, and secure communications protocols) and physical risks (facilities, travel of personnel, and security for events or activities). Staff should be trained on the security plan and any emergency response procedures, and the organization should have a communications strategy in place in the event of a crisis.



Internal controls, transparency, and governance: In some environments, CSOs may face legal reprisals or attacks on their reputation because of advocacy activities. Ensuring the quality and transparency of research methods and activities and tending to organizational governance and compliance with legitimate regulations can insulate the organization from arbitrary attacks.



Coalitions and External Support: In some environments, CSOs may be able to align their work with peer organizations or unlikely allies (such as businesses or trade groups) or seek the support of international supporters to insulate their work from certain risks.

6 Freedom House. (2020, June). Advocacy in Restricted Spaces: A toolkit for Civil Society Organizations. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/FINAL_COMPLETE_Lifeline_Toolkit_for_CS_O_Advocacy_in_Restrictive%20Spaces_June_2020.pdf

Table 6: Risk Register

Organizations may want to develop a risk register to monitor and manage risks at the outset of developing an advocacy strategy. The impact and probability of each risk category can be assessed as high, medium, or low, which provides the organization with a sense of which mitigation measures deserve the most attention. The register should be kept up to date and used to inform decisions throughout the lifecycle of a project or strategy.

Risk Category	Description	Impact	Probability	Mitigation Measures	Responsible
Legal	Legal sanction on the pretext of noncompliance	● ● ● High	● ● ○ Medium	Strengthen internal governance and controls	Operations Officer
Reputational	Mischaracterization of work of organization	● ● ○ Medium	● ● ○ Medium	Make sure methods and source of funding are transparent	President/CEO
Information Security	Disclosure or theft of sensitive information	● ● ● High	● ○ ○ Low	Strengthen digital security protocol	Security Officer

6

Bringing it all together: Action Planning

Once the problem and potential solutions have been identified, and an assessment has been conducted of the context, stakeholders, operating capacity and risks, the next step is to develop the advocacy action plan.

A. Prioritize and select goals and objectives:

Determine the highest priority goal and objectives based on impact, feasibility, and organizational or coalition strengths and capacities.

B. Supplemental analysis:

Find and collect data points and information that can be used to support your initial problem diagnosis and your proposed solutions.

C. Selection of core messages:

Using the available data and your stakeholder analysis, identify the value proposition of your solution for each specific audience, and determine who is best placed to deliver the message based on your analysis of influencers and stakeholders.

Advocacy messaging: What's Different About Civilian Harm Prevention and Response?

Crafting effective advocacy always requires understanding the outlook of the intended audience. When it comes to preventing, mitigating, and responding to civilian harm in conflict, different arguments may resonate more or less effectively with different governments or armed actors. Some armed actors may choose to improve protections for civilians out of their commitment to their organizational culture; others may recognize a strategic and policy benefit in protecting civilian life and livelihoods. The ICRC research study *Roots of Restraint*⁷ provides a helpful overview of some of the reasons why different armed groups tend to adhere to international humanitarian law for different reasons, including cultural, legal, and strategic reasons.

7 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, "The Roots of Restraint," (Geneva: International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, 2020), <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4352-roots-restraint-war>.

Table 7: The Logic of Civilian Harm Prevention and Response

 Type of Message	 Strength	 Caveats	 Example
Ethical/Values	Institutional values serve as important source of influence for profession of arms.	May be relativistic, heavily dependent on the source of the message, and may invite comparative ethical arguments.	Putting forth greater effort to prevent harm would reflect strongly on the character and honor of the military.
Strategic	Aligns prevention or response to harm with strategic goals of state, incl. military goals.	Subject to empirical counterarguments and largely dependent on strategic context.	Civilian harm undermines the effectiveness of security forces, including to attain the states' political goals.
Legal	Correlates prevention and response to compulsory legal obligations.	Some aspects of prevention and response not specifically prescribed in law.	Taking this step would serve to comply with an obligation under international law.
Empirical	Not dependent on strategic context or institutional culture to hold true. Can be used to support other forms of logic.	Requires articulation of why negative consequences (or positive effects) matter.	Insufficient attention to civilian harm (even if lawful) in attack can lead to second and third order effects, such as displacement and major economic problems.

Charting key messages can lend an advocacy strategy consistency. Messaging strategies can be tracked using a chart that correlates the problem or goal and target audience with the message, the advocacy “asks”, the rationale, and supporting evidence.

Table 8: Charting Key Messages

Problem/Gap	Civilians mistrust security forces
Data Points	56% of respondents had a negative experience with a soldier, whereas 75% said they did not believe the military would protect them from armed actors
Asks	The military should establish a regular dialogue in two sectors with communities
Rationale/ Message	Establishing meaningful consultation might help the military better understand security needs and concerns and is feasible based on past experience.
Audience	Civil Affairs Unit

D. Choice of Strategies:

Depending on the nature of the problem, the stakeholder analysis, and the risks involved, determine if your advocacy strategy will depend on:

- a. Adversarial (outside), positive engagement (inside), or hybrid:** Adversarial, or “outside” strategies assume that the government or armed actor may not make the needed changes or take the desired actions without an external source of pressure, such as. media, oversight body, or an international source of influence. An external source of pressure can exist within the bureaucracy, e.g. a source of higher authority or another agency or department. Positive engagement (or “inside” engagement) relies on a set of incentives within the institution or actor itself to take action without the need for external pressure. A hybrid approach can be taken where the range of incentives is mixed and where external forms of pressure can be applied in combination with insider strategies, e.g. a law is passed from the “outside”, but the coalition works privately with the government to implement the requirements of the law.
- b. Public, private, or hybrid:** Strategies may employ transparent activities (e.g. a televised panel discussion) and public messages (e.g. a report or quote in the media) or rely entirely on private messaging and discreet activities. Importantly, either adversarial or positive engagement can be done publicly or privately. e.g. adversarial engagement may involve private/off the record discussions with the parliament or media or other coalition members, while positive engagement may take place in a public venue, such as a multistakeholder event on community based protection involving the government, communities, and civil society. Many successful advocacy strategies often combine some elements of private and public advocacy.

No matter what advocacy strategy and you apply, but especially when you lean towards a more adversarial approach, clarifying the terms of the relationship with advocacy targets (e.g. if they should expect to see you or your coalition speaking publicly on an issue) early can ensure some degree of mutual trust and clear expectations.

ILLUSTRATION 5: ADVOCACY STRATEGY MAPPING



E. Constraints and Opportunities:

Using your contextual analysis, clearly identify constraints and opportunities that will affect your choice of tactics and timing.

F. Choice of tactics:

Determine which range of advocacy tactics your organization or coalition will use to advance your objectives and goals. Among the range of activities available:

- a. Lobbying: Direct engagement with policymakers or lawmakers to influence them to a specific action.
- b. Education: Providing insight to a set of stakeholders in order to shape the public and private debate.
- c. Media: Elevating the issue in the public domain through news and social media.
- d. Campaigns: Focusing a set of activities on a single advocacy issue for a specified period of time, often in partnership with other organizations or partners.
- e. Supporting others:
- f. Community engagement:

G. Chart activities:

Once the strategy, tactics, and context have been identified, the next step is to plan the activities. A chart might include:

- a. Objectives
- b. Strategy to be used
- c. Tactics to be used
- d. Activities
- e. Timing
- f. Responsible party (who will lead)
- g. Resources required
- h. Indicators of success/intermediate results sought

ILLUSTRATION 6: ACTION PLANNING

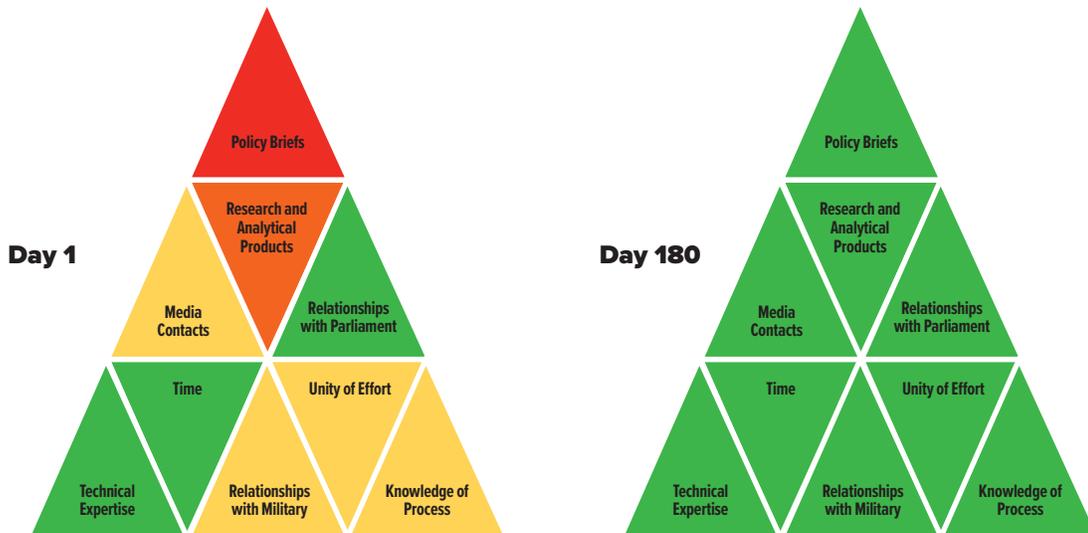
Objectives	Strategy	Tactics	Activities	Timing	Responsible	Resources	Indicators of Success/ Intermediate Results
The government tracks civilian casualties in order to prevent future incidents.	Positive/ Private	3 meetings with military representatives from planning and operations divisions	Meet with planning and operations divisions	January-March	CIVIC	Background on civilian harm tracking, policy brief	Military counterparts ask for second meeting; Verbal commitment to integrate tracking in operations; Policy decision taken; Policy changed/ issued

H. Build Resource Base and Enhance Capacity:

Before implementing the action plan, take stock of the resources and capacity necessary to succeed. Organizations or coalitions can use the self-assessment and the action plan to determine which information, capabilities and resources they should aim to collect, build, buy, or “borrow” (e.g. from other NGOs or experts). Some capabilities and information should be considered “core”, i.e. fundamental to the success of the action plan, and worthy of constant focus and development; while others should be viewed as necessary for the success of specific tactics and activities. Moreover, some capabilities necessary for a strategy to succeed are long term investments (knowledge and relationships) and others can be developed quickly. Aligning activities from the action plan with the relative maturity of a capability can be helpful to success (e.g. if strong relationships will be needed in month nine, start to build them now.)

ILLUSTRATION 7: STRATEGIC CAPACITY PYRAMID

On day one, a coalition has reviewed its self-assessment and action plan, and determined that to be successful, it needs to invest in developing core capabilities (such as knowledge of military process) and to develop several resources. Through research, training, and the production of policy briefs, it develops the capacity to fully carry out its strategy by month 6.



7

Evaluating Progress

Monitoring the effectiveness of an advocacy strategy throughout its implementation will not only allow an organization or coalition to know if it has been successful in achieving its goals and objectives (and the extent to which it is responsible for any observed changes), but also presents the opportunity to change course and adjust tactics throughout the lifespan of the action plan.

Measuring advocacy activities can present specific challenges, for example:

- Private engagement and interactions may not be transparent, and therefore can be difficult to track.
- The time horizon for achieving progress may be long and not align with the total lifespan of an advocacy campaign or strategy.
- Results from coalition or campaign-based advocacy can be difficult to attribute to a specific party.
- The effects of advocacy can also be the absence of an action, i.e. a “negative” result

Several technical resources are available for organizations and coalitions to develop monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plans and approaches, but any sound MEL plan will involve the following:

1. Meaningful, measurable indicators of progress against desired results and outcomes (goals and objectives).
2. A description of how data will be collected for indicators and as part of the evidence base for impact.
3. The identification of biases, plausible alternative explanations for observable phenomena, and negative results.
4. Planned and ad hoc opportunities to evaluate progress and to adjust strategy and tactics.

Measuring Impact: What’s Different About Civilian Harm Prevention and Response?

While not unique among advocacy activities, the nature of advocacy relating to civilian harm prevention and response can be complicated, given the fluid nature of conflict, the time horizons often involved with changes within security institutions and policies, the rapid turnover of stakeholders, and the relatively opaque nature of security institutions themselves.

As such, when building MEL systems, consider including the following:

1. Identifying program goals and objectives that relate to your general organization-wide targets to enable cross-program tracking. These are often general in their scope and represent qualitative progress (e.g. Civilians impacted by conflict bring about improved protection for their communities.) These targets should relate to quantifiable indicators (e.g. the number of governments with which the organization engages regarding protection advocacy.)

2. Attributing quantifiable specific goals and objectives to each program (e.g. the number of a legislative body commits to publicly or privately regarding the protection of civilians.) These are often conceptualized in the process of applying for funding for the program and are thus key to successfully setting the program's tone and pace.
3. Tracking all program activities [meetings with stakeholders (policy makers, coalition members, local agents), correspondence including protection recommendations and expertise (emails and documents containing policy proposals), or external communication (press releases and social media posts) pertaining to your program.] As the program progresses over time, consider using this tracker to identify the milestones leading up to results attained during the lifespan of the project. This encourages program members to document activities every month to ensure a comprehensive data set for analysis.



SUMMARY + CHECKLIST

Guiding questions for developing an advocacy strategy:

- What is the problem or gap that can and should be addressed?
- What are the proximate causes of the problem or sources of the gap? What are the contributing factors?
- What solutions serve to address the problems or gaps identified in the problem analysis?
- What changes are necessary to law, policy, procedure, doctrine, or other to achieve the desired end-state?
- What factors might enable the achievement of the result? What factors might stand in the way?
- Who is responsible for making the changes necessary? Who has the power to influence them? Who else will support the change? Who will oppose it?
- What actions should be taken?
- What risks are involved? How do we manage them?
- What do we need in order to succeed?
- How will we know if the change has been made, and how will we determine if we helped to bring it about?