

Towards Hybridity in the Protection of Civilians

Combined workshop report



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Executive Summary

This report reflects the outcome of three workshops held in the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland through the Summer of 2022 under the title *Towards hybridity in the protection of civilians*. Workshops were held at Durham University, Kings College London, and Dublin City University, and were attended by policymakers, practitioners, academics, military personnel, and humanitarian workers. The workshop series was funded by a joint ESRC/IRC networking grant.

Underlying dynamics which affect civilian protection

Definitional challenges fall into four distinct questions: *Who is being protected? From what are civilians being protected? What does protection look like? Who is a protection actor?* Regardless of whether one works in policymaking, academia, or in the spaces where civilian protection is implemented, these questions are present. In addressing these questions, workshop participants incorporated questions over power, interpretation of conflict dynamics, and the flexibility of overarching policy frameworks.

The state cannot be overlooked as a key factor in civilian protection activities. Discussion on the state's role came in two ways: Firstly, the role of the state as an actor in the location where civilian protection activity occurs. This for example would be classed as the actions of the 'host state' in UN missions. Here the state can act as gatekeeper, facilitator of civilian protection offered by external actors/agencies, or a threat to civilians. The state also plays a role in setting the terms of the wider debate and development of civilian protection policy. States have a fundamental role in shaping multilateral policy environments and the extent to which they support multilateral initiatives at the global level can influence local activities.

Understanding hybridity in contemporary civilian protection

Considering the two underlying challenges above, the workshops analysed the hybrid nature of civilian protection. The workshops focused on vertical coordination of civilian protection, noting the interaction between policy developed at policy hubs (such as NATO or UN Headquarters), those that work within those organisations and are tasked to interpret the policy through creating mandates and practice, those who implement that policy in deployment zones. Concurrently, there are processes led at the local level, with community actors, and civil society creating their own forms of civilian protection actions (often not led by official policy), and seeking to expose these approaches to outside actors. These top-down and bottom-up approaches are inter-twined, yet because of various factors, it is difficult to achieve coherence.

Looking to the future we see two significant **security challenges**. Firstly, **private military and security contractors** will shape civilian protection activities. Recent history has made policymakers aware of the negative consequences of PMSCs in the civilian protection sphere, with the *Wagner Group* operating in Mali in support of the Government. Secondly, the **impact of explosive ordinances** in populated areas was discussed as a significant area of activity in civilian protection, with UN peacekeepers working under this type of threat in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) mission in Lebanon, and organisations such as *Airwars* who track civilian harm primarily from explosive weapons.

Workshops identified the importance of the **relational aspects** of civilian protection between the many actors that exist in this space. This comes in two ways. Firstly, through understanding of issues of intersectionality with regards to how different communities understand civilian threat and

response. This incorporates (for example) masculinities research, work into the perspectives of LGBT+ communities, or persons with disabilities in contexts of violent conflict. Secondly, there is an urgent need to understand the ways in which actors communicate with each other within the civilian protection sphere, through incorporating approaches to understand interpersonal skills, organisational flexibility, power, and agency to analyse interaction.

Translating this to a training framework

An outcome of the workshops was to better understand training for those who are engaging in civilian protection activities. There is a considerable **knowledge base** now in which to draw on to gain knowledge of civilian protection, however much of this is written at policy hubs, away from the context-specific conditions where civilian protection occurs. There was agreement from workshop participants with regards to the **skillsets** required for civilian protection activities, with cultural and interpersonal skills forming the core. This means that the training field must continue to incorporate **novel approaches and methods**, to best equip trainees with the skills, knowledge and attitudes required. In addition, workshop participants advocated the incorporation of **local participation** from those from the conflict into which personnel were to be deployed.

Substantive discussion

Introduction

Under the overall aim to *identify commonalities, differences, and models of good practices in forming and implementing concepts of 'civilian protection' in third party intervention into violent conflict*, this workshop series, funded by a joint ESRC/IRC¹ networking grant, brought together the concept of hybridity with civilian protection.

Since the United Nations' (UN) first 'cross-cutting' Security Council Resolution which considered the 'protection of civilians'² in 1999 (UNSCR 1264), a comprehensive suite of policy responses from a range of organisations has emerged which guide the actions of national and international actors to better analyse, prepare and react to instances where civilian populations are targeted by armed actors. This has led to mixed mode interventions with multiple intervening parties who have different mandates, competencies, and constitutional constraints. The formalisation of civilian protection through mandates and policies does not mean that civilian protection did not exist before UNSCR 1264. Humanitarian organisations have a long history of protection activities. Moreover, civilian self-protection – organised from within communities affected by violent conflict – is a practice which has a considerably longer history.

At the core of these workshops was the concept of 'hybridity'³. A theory drawn from the peacebuilding and development fields, hybridity refers to the interaction between third party interveners, and those who are subject to the intervention. It also refers to heterogeneity within categories. So, for example, it might refer to military and unarmed actors engaged in civilian protection. Workshops examined how intervening organisations have adapted their policies when operating within a shared space with other organisations, and how they react when local actors adapt, ignore, or resist their version of 'civilian protection'. Despite significant academic and policy attention being paid to the normative and operational dilemmas of civilian protection, the links between protection and hybridity have only been explored in limited ways. Hybridity therefore opens up opportunities in which to better understand how approaches coexist, complement or contradict existing mechanisms of protection in conflict zones, and contribute to UN Secretary General Guterres' call in 2019 for 'sustained engagement and dialogue among Member States, the UN and civil society to improve the protection of civilians'. It is this blended or mixed economy of civilian protection that our workshop series has been seeking to explore.

Underlying issues

There are two underlying issues which permeated the three workshops held over Summer 2022. Regardless of profession, research area, or institution, speakers and participants spoke of these challenges: definitional challenges and the role of the state.

1 Economic and Social Research Council / Irish Research Council

2 A note on definition. We use in this report the broader term 'civilian protection' as opposed to 'Protection of Civilians' (or PoC).

3 Mac Ginty, Roger (2010), *Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace*, *Security Dialogue*, 41:4, 391-412, Stephen, Monica (2017), *Partnerships in Conflict: How violent conflict impacts local civil society and how international partners respond*, (London, Oxfam International/International Alert)

Definitional challenges

Before investigating the mechanics of civilian protection, workshop participants often underlined the definitional challenges associated with the concept. These definitional discussions usually centred on four questions: Who is being protected, from what are they being protected from, what does protection look like, and who is doing the protection?

Who is being protected?

Questions were raised over who could be defined as 'civilian' in certain contexts. Questions within this definitional predicament included:

- What if a civilian has access to small arms – does that make them less in need of protection?
- If a civilian is also a member of an armed group (who may undertake front-line or support activities), does that makes them in need of protection?
- Who defines what civilians are constituted as vulnerable, and which ones are not?

The first two questions were emphasised by practitioners – particularly those who had experience of deployment in violent conflict contexts. They highlighted the blurred lines between belligerent, armed civilian, and a civilian who has access to arms. This would lead to challenges associated to impartiality when it came to protection activities, particularly with regards to how the intervening actors' actions are perceived by particular groups.

The third question concerns issues of *power*. Intervening organisations make decisions as to who is classified as a civilian and who is not. Often this will be led by policy frameworks largely created outside of the context into which deployment occurs. This introduces questions of power in how actors are defined, and who is undertaking the defining. It was argued in the workshops that local actors have less power in making these distinctions as opposed to international actors.

From what are civilians being protected?

This related to the type of threat posed to civilians in times of crisis. Threats can be overt or implied, direct or indirect.

Those with experience of UN deployments noted that protection activities were often in relation to threat of direct attack from militia groups (in the case of MINUSMA⁴ in Mali), or when civilians were fleeing violence and seeking sanctuary at UN camps (UNMISS⁵ in South Sudan). Protection activities in the UN context also came as a result of the threat of attack. Irish military personnel deployed in Lebanon (UNIFIL⁶) noted that in Southern Lebanon, protection was as much about awareness raising with regards to what to do in the case of a potential escalation in conflict between belligerent groups. Additionally, there are often indirect forms of violence which may be less obvious. These may be strikes on critical infrastructure such as power stations, targeted state policies towards one group, or restrictions on movement for particular groups or agencies working within conflict zones.

The type of threat can be interpreted differently dependent on one's perspective. This can be informed by the organisation that one works for, humanitarian, military, developmental, or political. It can also be informed by aspects such as gender, race, ethnic background, knowledge of context, and level of engagement with communities under threat.

4 United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

5 United Nations Mission in South Sudan

6 United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

What does protection look like?

Workshops had a range of practitioners and researchers who examined different forms of protection. Those who considered armed forms of protection outlined policies and practice from various UN missions, the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence's approach to human security, and the incorporation of human security into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) 2022 Strategic concept⁷. Here definitions were wide-ranging and context specific as to what armed protection looked like. Armed protection is not only provided by international actors though. Here, workshops discussed non-state armed groups, militias, and armed community groups, and their role in armed forms of protection. It was stated in several sessions that most unarmed protection occurs locally and is often difficult for outsiders to see. With regards to unarmed protection there was no set definition of what this would look like. Different groups have different strategies, with some focusing on models of accompaniment, some on forms of engagement and consensus-building with local armed actors, and other groups seeing advocacy and the delivery of necessary humanitarian aid as a form of unarmed protection.

Who is a protection actor?

There are multiple protection actors who operate in the space of protracted and violent conflict, and workshops identified questions over who could be seen as a 'legitimate' protection actor in these contexts.

In many cases this question was asked in relation to non-state armed groups and militias who operated in conflict zones. Such groups may be party to a conflict but would also offer a degree of protection in the territories which they control. This has policy implications, particularly for international organisations who may have a mandate not to engage with particular armed groups, but find that those very groups undertake protection roles. Workshop participants also asked questions concerning the assumed legitimacy of international actors in certain contexts. This extends to different actors within a deployment, for instance within a single UN peacekeeping mission, there may be numerous UN agencies working in different protection issues. This may be more acute if well-resourced international organisations do not offer guarantees on protection, or their actions cause increased instability and a heightened potential of violence towards civilians. Within these discussions, questions related to power dynamics and bias were raised in terms of who is defining others as a protection actor.

Whilst a raft of definitional issues exists, the utility of finding definitional clarity may not be of so much use. Instead, the workshops demonstrated that organisations engaging in protection activities need to be aware of the complex web of actions and actors, that no actor automatically derives legitimacy, that vulnerable communities are rarely homogeneous, and that the range of threats can be overt and unseen. This is a complex task.

The State

It is almost impossible to understand civilian protection without considering the role of the state. All workshops contained discussion on various factors that would affect the actions of a state in which civilians were under threat or being harmed, as well as outlining that the state as a potential threat to the wellbeing of those in need of protection, when it was either unable or unwilling to undertake protection activities.

Those with experience of the MINUSMA outlined the state as a key determinant in terms of the

7 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept., Available at <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>

mission's freedom of movement, or the ability of the mission to undertake certain protection-related initiatives. Participants outlined that interactions became more complex as the Malian government entered into defence cooperation with the *Wagner Group* (a Private Military and Security Contractor), which in turn led to militarised approaches to conflict management. This is an example of a challenge highlighted from participants regarding authoritarian conflict management by states that are party to violent conflict. Here, states seek militarised responses as opposed to engaging with opposition groups (armed and unarmed). This reduces space for protection actors and poses fundamental questions concerning the extent to which actors can work freely in such contexts.

Related here is a broader question raised by participants about the international peacebuilding architecture, multilateralism, and the extent to which states with a longer history of advocating civilian protection and human security are losing enthusiasm for the endeavour. Participants noted that although there is a strong – and expanding – bureaucratic structure devoted to civilian protection in international institutions, there are questions over political willingness by member states to maintain a long-term interest in supporting principles of civilian protection and peacebuilding. The effects of intervention in Libya, and inability to reach broad consensus regarding violent war in Syria and Yemen, demonstrate this.

Understanding hybridity in contemporary civilian protection: attempting to understand vertical coordination

Examining the 'vertical' pressures on civilian protection, workshops surveyed actors from the international to the local. Although these would often be 'organised actors' such as organisations (the UN), national governments or organised civil society actors, it included those actors who may not be structured at the micro level.

For some actors and processes, it is logical that top-down processes bring developments in the normalisation of protection activities. For instance, NATO's newly released strategic concept was cited as an example which will put human security at the centre of NATO doctrine and concepts, thereby influencing the activities of NATO member states. Additionally, the UN Security Council, and the mandates it produces, sets an agenda which influences UN missions, and the UN Secretariat, and to some degree individual member states. The same can be said for the African Union. Yet such top down processes have limitations. Frameworks can be linked to funding, meaning that organisations will seek to fit their work into existing trends to access funding streams, regardless of their capacities. Moreover, frameworks require flexibility, particularly when faced with challenging local environments.

Yet the trend in understanding civilian protection – and one which was highlighted in the workshops was that a substantial amount of civilian protection occurs at the local level. The workshops heard from research in Cameroon, South Sudan, Colombia, and Mali, which all highlighted the considerable work undertaken by local actors, and the creative ways in which civilian protection has been operationalised at the community level. This could be through the use of coded language, visual tools such as murals, and community activism to raise awareness of what steps to take in times of potential violence.

The workshop heard examples of how international organisations interact with local agencies, whereby models which rely on local-level consent for access, negotiation, and local participation were highlighted as being effective. However, two questions emerged about engaging with local actors. Firstly, to what extent do hybrid interactions between these external 'protection' actors and local

communities mean for how actors are perceived, and actions performed and narrated? Secondly, can too much structure inhibit or even weaken the organic processes of local protection such as via local defence groups, militias, and unarmed civilian groups? Both of these questions are concerned with the relational aspects of civilian protection, and how this informs governance frameworks in the civilian protection domain.

This is sometimes hindered by the challenges of process. International actors are required to identify and engage with local actors. This takes time, requires knowledge of the context, and relies on a process of trust-building between interlocutors. Often international deployments are staffed by people on contracts of 6-12 months, which mitigates against long-term thinking. There is a danger of taking short-cuts, which could lead to internationals choosing local actors who are better known to them. This influences local capacities, with some actors gaining more 'traction' than others.

Moreover, there was frustration that there often appeared to be a lack of formalised approaches for local participation in strategic engagement on civilian protection (such as national dialogues/action plans). This means that local actors can only operationalise civilian response as a reaction to the situation presented to them, as opposed to having a stake in longer-term civilian protection through political processes.

Future security challenges

The role of PMSCs

An aspect to consider in this mix is the role of Private Military and Security Contractors (PMSCs). Although these are non-state actors, they may possess comparable capabilities to a state's capacities. In the context of violent conflict, this could have a significant effect on civilian protection. This was highlighted repeatedly from participants who had experience of engaging in civilian protection activities in Mali. In this case, the PMSC Wagner Group deployed in 2021 to Mali to support the transitional authority. The deployment of the Wagner Group has had a notable effect on the conflict, with the Malian government launching offensive operations, limiting freedom of movement for the UN mission, and partaking in alleged abuses of the civilian population⁸. This relationship has also fostered a challenging strategic environment whereby the UN is less able to access the Malian authorities to build effective political processes for protection. The employment of the Wagner Group by the Malian government was highlighted as a contemporary example of authoritarian conflict management.

Explosive ordinances

The impact of the use of explosive devices in populated areas was discussed at workshops. At the Dublin workshop, the former Force Commander of UNIFIL explained how the mission's PoC⁹ posture had a considerable component devoted to the use of explosive devices by belligerent parties. Moreover, representatives from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs discussed the work that has been undertaken by the Irish Mission to the UN in leading debate on this in the Security Council.

Additionally, an approach which is based on minimising civilian casualties is incumbent for interventions regarding protection to be effective. The London workshop had representation from

8 See for instance: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/6/28/russias-wagner-mercenaries-in-mali-drive-refugees-to-mauritania>

9 Protection of Civilians

AirWars, a not-for-profit organisation which tracks, assesses, archives and investigates civilian harm resulting primarily from explosive weapons use in conflict-affected nations. Airwars' work in documenting the use of explosive ordnances in Syria, Iraq, and Libya, was outlined in the London workshop, as was the work undertaken in raising awareness within militaries of strategies to mitigate civilian harm.

Future research: the relational aspects

Taken together, the workshops revealed the array of actors in the civilian protection field. There is no one type of organisation and no set policy towards protection. In order to progress understanding, we argue for two areas to be developed:

- 1) *Greater nuance in terms of intersectionality* in how we understand issues in civilian protection. Whilst appreciating the important steps undertaken to advance the Women Peace and Security, and Child Protection Agendas in terms of civilian protection, there is still much work to be done to deepen our understanding of how different communities understand the topic. Gendered approaches which incorporate masculinities research, incorporate the perspectives of LGBT+ communities, and of persons with disabilities in contexts of violent conflict, are just three examples of where greater awareness of intersectionality can add nuance and understanding to civilian protection.
- 2) *Frameworks in which to examine the relationships between actors*¹⁰. Mapping actors and identifying the civilian protection landscape can only take analysis so far. It is the ways in which different protection actors communicate and react to communication which is of value. Here, questions of interpersonal skills, organisational flexibility, power, and agency can be used to analyse interaction. Engaging in such analysis can go beyond the 'vertical' framework that formed the discussions in this workshop. How local groups invested in protection activities interact with each other within conflict contexts is one example of this, as is processes of collaboration and coordination.

10 See for instance: Felicity Gray (2022) Protection as connection: feminist relational theory and protecting civilians from violence in South Sudan, *Journal of Global Ethics*, 18:1, 152-170.

Translating into training: developing a learning pack

An observation from the workshops is that (much like the broader peacebuilding field), there is no standardised form of pre-deployment training to prepare practitioners for civilian protection activities. There are positive aspects to this insofar as it encourages creativity in developing bespoke courses which are more context specific.

Existing courses that were discussed at workshops outlined that amongst organisations there existed a wealth of **knowledge** on the topic of civilian protection. Knowledge would come from (but is not limited to) the following sources:

- Legal texts (International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law)
- UN Documentation (UNSC Resolutions on PoC, UN Secretary General Reports on PoC, Department of Peace Operations policy and guidance, UN Standard Training Materials, UN Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials, UN PoC Handbook, UN Implementing Guidelines for Military Components of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions.
- Non-UN policy documentation: Draft guidelines for the protection of civilians in African Union peace support operations, Concept on PoC in European Union-led military operations, NATO Strategic Concept, NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians
- National government policy and strategy, military doctrine
- Organisational policy towards civilian protection (e.g. ICRC Protection Policy)

Notable is that much of this documentation is from bureaucratic centres – be it Headquarters, or Doctrine and Concepts centres. Although informed by local conditions and experience of deployment, these documents are designed at a strategic level, often in locations away from the zones in which people are to be deployed.

In terms of **skillset**, there was agreement amongst workshop participants that cultural and interpersonal skills are fundamental when engaging with communities. With participants noting that civilian protection is an ‘art and a skill’ as opposed to a technical process, it was strongly advocated that emotional intelligence is fundamental to the process. However, it was also noted that creativity and adaptability were difficult to achieve under rigid frameworks and bureaucratic protocols.

The skillset is therefore threefold:

- Possessing the skill set to utilise the knowledge base of policy
- Navigating the skills needed to engage with civilians
- Navigating the process of incorporating the needs of the context with the needs of the deploying organisation

Participants identified that the **attitude** which trainees are required to possess is one which needs to be reflexive and adaptable. Reflexivity is in terms of understanding one’s own approach to conflict, violence, and its resolution, and how that approach may or may not influence the dynamics of the situation into which one is deploying. A willingness to be adaptable is useful in terms of how one seeks to build the relationships which are valuable in sustaining processes of civilian protection. This involves adapting to the needs of interlocutors, finding ways to establish open and regular forms of communication, and relationships built on trusted frameworks of cooperation.

Whereas individuals were seen in the workshops as being able to work with these attitudes,

participants debated the extent to which organisational cultures possess these attitudes in the work they do in civilian protection activities. With that in mind questions were asked about how organisations demonstrate reflexivity and adaptability in violent conflict contexts, and where best practice may lie.

Workshop participants alluded to the requirement for continuing to expand training models to incorporate **novel approaches and methods**, to best equip trainees with the skills, knowledge and attitudes outlined above. The use of simulations, tabletop exercises and role plays were cited here. However, participants noted that such exercises need to be associated with learning outcomes and not be undertaken in isolation from the needs and requirements of learners and the context into which they were deploying. Moreover, participants noted that there would be benefit in **cross-institutional learning** between actors such as NGOs, UN, military, and unarmed peacekeepers.

A major gap identified in training programmes was the incorporation of **local participation** from those from the conflict area into which personnel were to be deployed. There are three levels to which local perspectives can be utilised in training:

- With such a strong knowledge base being formed by strategic-level documents formed at HQ level, there are questions as to the extent to which knowledge is informed by community level perspectives. Here questions were asked about the extent to which codified or informal understandings of civilian protection could be exposed to training institutes, in order to better prepare those who intervene.
- Local participation on training could also utilise web-based conferencing facilities (Zoom, Skype), to engage in hybrid forms of training. This form of interaction can be a direct way in which groups from the context to which deployment occurs can offer real-time perspectives on their experiences and protection needs.
- In the creation and design phase of training events, there exists potential for co-creation, whereby actors from conflict environments have a stake in how training is developed for those who will be deploying from third countries. This could offer training programmes a greater level of depth, as well as offering those deploying a level of nuance and understanding of the conflict, and those who it affects.

Networking

Where our attendees came from

Primarily this was a networking grant, and considerable effort was made to ensure that the workshops were attended by a mix of policymakers, practitioners, and academics. Amongst academics we took into consideration career stage and gender balance and ensured early career researchers were invited. The three tables below show which organisations our attendees came from. As well as a spread of governmental actors, participants came from 16 different policy/practitioner organisations (Table 2), and 18 Academic Institutions (Table 3).

Table 1 – Government/policy

| Government body | Department (if applicable) | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | Intl Security Policy Unit | Disarmament Unit | Conflict Resolution Unit |
| Irish defence forces | UN Training School Ireland | Former force commander, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) | |
| UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office | Office of Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation (Stabilisation Unit) | | |
| British Army | UK Army personnel formerly deployed to UN Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) | Head of human security unit | Staff from UK permanent joint headquarters |
| Royal Navy | | | |
| NATO | Joint Force Command | | |

Table 2 – Policy/practitioner organisations

| |
|---|
| Airwars |
| CIVIC (Centre for Civilians in Conflict) |
| Concern |
| Crisis Action |
| Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) |
| ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) |
| Independent consultant |
| ICVA (International Council of Voluntary Agencies) |
| Irish Red Cross |
| Islamic Relief |
| MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières) |
| NUPI (Norwegian foreign policy institute) |
| Save the Children |
| Trócaire |
| War Child |
| YARN (York Asia Research Network) |

Table 3 – Academic institutions

| |
|---|
| Prifysgol Aberystwyth University |
| Coventry University |
| Dublin City University |
| University of Dundee |
| Durham University |
| University of Edinburgh |
| Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva |
| University of Glasgow |
| King's College London |
| University of York |
| Leeds Beckett University |
| National University of Ireland Galway |
| Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro |
| University of Reading |
| SOAS |
| University College London |
| University of Leeds |
| University of Manchester |

Demographic of attendees

Table 4 offers the number of male and female participants attended each workshop, as well as the total number of attendees at each event.

Table 4 – Attendance numbers

| Institution | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------------------|------|--------|-------|
| Durham University | 5 | 18 | 23 |
| Kings College, London | 11 | 13 | 24 |
| Dublin City University * | 12 | 17 | 29 |

* There were 19 in-person and 10 Online (it was a hybrid event). In person – 10 male/9 female; Online – 2 male/8 female

After removing repeat attendees out (a total of 10 people attended more than one workshop) the **total number of unique attendees was 62**. From this, 22 were male, and 40 were female.

We specifically asked those in the network to invite PhD researchers. This brought positive results with PhD research represented from universities at Aberystwyth, Edinburgh, Durham, Leeds, DCU, NUI Galway, and King’s College London (KCL). We were unable to gather data on the extent to which those who attended were from under-represented groups in the sector, as well as the exact numbers of early career scholars and PhD researchers at the events.

Workshop sessions

Table 5 (below) outlines the workshop sessions. Each workshop reflected different aspects of the field of civilian protection. The Durham University workshop was largely concerned with debates from the academic discipline, as well as offering a scoping study of the various actors engaged in civilian protection activities. KCL was focused more on policy and practitioner organisations based in London, as well as the Ministry of Defence and FCDO. The Dublin workshop was focused on the Irish perspective of PoC, and included humanitarian workers, staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Defence Forces, and academia.

Table 5 – Workshop Sessions

| Venue | Topic |
|--------|--|
| Durham | The different actors in Civilian Protection I |
| | The different actors in Civilian Protection II |
| | Methodological considerations in civilian protection research I |
| | Methodological considerations in civilian protection research II |
| | Different formats of Civilian Protection I |
| | Different formats of Civilian Protection II |
| KCL | Organisational Approaches to PoC |
| | Challenges of horizontal coordination |
| | Challenges of vertical coordination: the local |
| | Challenges of vertical coordination: the strategic |
| | Lessons learning and engagement |
| Dublin | Key turning points in the evolution of civilian protection |
| | How to communicate PoC to colleagues and partners |
| | New challenges and alternative perspectives |
| | Developments at UN level |
| | Developing training and learning on PoC |
| | Wrap up and reflections |



Towards Hybridity in the Protection of Civilians

Economic and Social Research Council & Irish Research Council Joint funded networking project

Workshop 1: Durham University

This networking project is interested in the “hybridised” nature of civilian protection and how it often involves multiple actors (from militaries to peace groups) working at different levels. Often they have different understandings of where civilian protection begins and ends, and how it might be most effective. The workshop is split into three thematic areas, which will briefly be explored below:

1) *The different actors in Civilian Protection*

This section surveys actors involved in civilian protection, and asks about the varying institutionalised and non-institutionalised approaches to the question. Amongst those actors who intervene in violent conflict, varying definitions exist as to what civilian protection entails. In understanding civilian protection, distinctions exist between humanitarian organisations, military organisations, multilateral institutions, and national governments. It should be noted that from within organisations divergence exists. For instance, in the UN, the Department of Peace Operations¹¹ and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have different approaches¹².

Intervening actors may engage with the aim of creating conditions where vulnerable populations are protected from violent actors in conflict zones. Although this incorporates the deployment of military personnel, it does not necessarily make this a uniquely militarised activity. Here the impact of organisations such as Non-Violent Peaceforce¹³ serves as an example. At the other end of the spectrum are examples from military organisations building policy to consider and mitigate harm they may inflict on civilian populations whilst undertaking intervention. Such considerations are particularly essential in urban environments, particularly involving the use of airpower and other delivery of explosive ordinances in built up areas.

Actors involved in civilian protection are not necessarily outsiders. A growing field of research identifies local capacities for civilian protection, whereby communities demonstrate their agency in responding to the threat of, or use of violence by armed actors. The everyday activities of civil society actors, community organisers, journalists, and faith leaders (to name a few) may not be codified in the same way as international actors, but offer valuable lessons in civilian protection.

11 UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support, DPKO/DFS Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping, New York, United Nations, 2015

12 UN OCHA, *Protection*, <https://www.unocha.org/themes/protection>

13 Non Violent Peaceforce, <https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org>

2) *Methodological considerations in civilian protection research*

This session will enquire about the methodological considerations which researchers in the PoC field encounter. Policy and academic studies into civilian protection use a wide range of data gathering tools to contribute in this field. From the policy side, the Centre for Civilians in Conflict use interview data in their extensive research which articulates the voices of civilian populations¹⁴. The Dutch NGO, PAX has developed the *Human Security Survey*, which incorporates 1-1 interviews, reflective focus groups, and dialogue between civilians and authorities¹⁵.

In academic studies, the application of quantitative methodologies to the study of civilian protection has offered significant contributions. For instance, Lisa Hultman (along with Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon) has used quantitative data to identify that the more police/troops deployed on peacekeeping operations, the higher the likelihood that violence against civilians decreases¹⁶. Arts Based Methods have added greater depth to the 'everyday' activities of civilian populations who exist or have existed in zones where non-state armed actors have undertaken attacks on the civilian population. Here we look to Julian et al's assertion that it is important to understand the agency of people, the value and importance of their actions in the local context, and 'that people's everyday experiences based on these actions make them valuable holders of experiential knowledge that gives them the capacity to act knowingly'¹⁷.

The workshop asks the extent to which research methods from the peacebuilding field have been or can be incorporated to understanding civilian protection. With the 'everyday' aspects of civilian protection gaining increased prevalence, what can be learned from studies that seek to understand local capacities for peace, hybridity¹⁸, and the associated challenges of undertaking fieldwork?¹⁹

3) *Different formats of civilian protection*

This session seeks to build on the experiences of civilian protection in its various guises. This session will examine how individuals, groups and organisations have responded to civilian protection concerns, including early warning systems, protection mechanisms during periods of violence, and how groups react after violent incidents.

There is a range of studies which have sought to identify lessons from experiences in civilian protection. The UN has reported on well-documented failures in protection²⁰, and the wider considerations which influenced UN responses²¹. Moreover, the UN's 'Protection of Civilians' strategy

14 Centre for Civilians in Conflict, Research Publications, <https://civiliansinconflict.org/publications/research/>

15 PAX, Human Security Survey, <https://protectionofcivilians.org/topics/human-security-survey/>

16 Hultman, L., Kathman, J., and Shannon, M., United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War. *American Journal of Political Science*, 57, 2013, 875–91

17 Julian, R. Bliesemann de Guevara, B. & Redhead, R., From expert to experiential knowledge: exploring the inclusion of local experiences in understanding violence in conflict, *Peacebuilding*, 7:2, 2019, 210-225

18 Mac Ginty R. Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace. *Security Dialogue*, 41:4, 2010, 391-412

19 Mac Ginty, Roger, Brett, Roddy & Vogel, Birte. *The Companion to Peace and Conflict Fieldwork*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020

20 United Nations, Executive summary of the independent special investigation into the violence in Juba in 2016 and the response by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (S/2016/924)

21 United Nations, Evaluation of the implementation and results of protection of civilians mandates in United Nations peacekeeping operations: Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, New York, United Nations, 2014. Found at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/767929>

in South Sudan has been the subject of study²². NGOs have a broad range of reports which examine particular aspects of protection. PAX has examined the mechanisms for civil society organizations and (affected) civilians to directly report an allegation of civilian harm to the security actor they deem responsible²³. The Stimson Center has examined how states operationalise their duty to protect Human Rights defenders, and the associated risks faced by those who undertake this vital role²⁴. Additionally studies from the Syrian war have identified how interim councils and medical workers have maintained essential services in besieged cities²⁵, alongside efforts from first responders²⁶

Workshop Programme and details:

| Day | Time | Session |
|----------|-------------|--|
| Thursday | 14.00–14.30 | Arrival, refreshments, welcome to the Project & Workshop |
| | 14.30–15.45 | <i>The different actors in Civilian Protection I</i> |
| | 16.00–17.30 | <i>The different actors in Civilian Protection II</i> |
| Friday | 09.30–09.45 | Arrival, refreshments |
| | 09.45–11.00 | <i>Methodological considerations in civilian protection research I</i> |
| | 11.15–12.30 | <i>Methodological considerations in civilian protection research II</i> |
| | 12.30–13.30 | Lunch |
| | 13.30–14.30 | <i>Different formats of Civilian Protection I</i> |
| | 14.30–16.00 | <i>Different formats of Civilian Protection II</i> |
| | 16.00–16.30 | Wrap up/next steps |

22 See for example, Lilly, D., Protection of Civilians sites: a new type of displacement settlement?, *Humanitarian Exchange*, September 12, 2014, <https://odihpn.org/publication/protection-of-civilians-sites-a-new-type-of-displacement-settlement/>; Briggs, C., Protection of Civilians (POC) sites and their impact on the broader protection environment in South Sudan, *Humanitarian Exchange*, January 26, 2017. <https://odihpn.org/publication/protection-civilians-poc-sites-impact-broader/>

23 PAX, Civilian harm reporting mechanisms: A useful means to support monitoring and accountability?, May 2022 <https://protectionofcivilians.org/report/civilian-harm-reporting-mechanisms/>

24 Nolan, H., Protecting those who protect human rights: Opportunities and Risks for Action at the UN, Washington, Stimson Center, 2022. <https://www.stimson.org/2022/protecting-those-who-protect-human-rights-opportunities-and-risks-for-action-at-the-un/>

25 Morrison C. Providing basic services under siege: preliminary insights from interim councils and medical providers in besieged urban areas of Syria. *Environment and Urbanization*, 31:1, 2019, 309-324.

26 Morrison, C. Civilian protection in urban sieges: capacities and practices of first responders in Syria. IIED Working Paper. IIED, London, 2017. <https://pubs.iied.org/10834iied>

Workshop address:

Radisson Blu Hotel,
Frankland Ln,
Durham DH1 5TA

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Towards Hybridity in the Protection of Civilians

Economic and Social Research Council & Irish Research Council
Joint funded networking project

Workshop 2: Kings College London

TIMETABLE

| 27 June 2022 | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| Time | Title | Description | Facilitator/Presentations |
| 12.00–13.00 networking lunch / introduction | Welcome and Introductions | Key aims / Dublin Recap / where we want to go with the project | Facilitator: Sukanya / David |
| 13.00–14.30 Session I | Organisational Approaches to PoC | What process do protection organisations undertake to arrive at an understanding of the root causes of violence against civilians, and possible strategies of humanitarian protection? | UK Military/ FCDO/ Stabilization Unit, NATO – Facilitator: Sukanya / Walt |
| 14.30–15.00 | Coffee | | |
| 15.00–16.30 Session II | Challenges of horizontal coordination | What challenges exist when intervening organisations with different approaches/priorities towards civilian protection engage in a post conflict environment? | ICRC, MSF, NDUC, ODI Facilitator: David |
| 17.00–18.30 | Early Dinner at Covent Garden | | |
| 28 June 2022 | | | |
| 10.30-12.00 Session III | Challenges of vertical coordination: the local | How do local perspectives/ experiences of local actors influence the development of policy and practice? | CIVIC, War Child, Islamic Relief, ODI- Facilitator: Sukanya |
| 12.00–13.00 | Lunch | | |

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|---|--|--|--|
| 13.00–14.00 Session IV | Challenges of vertical coordination: the strategic | To what extent do strategic-level developments change or alter policy? how do these match local needs and desires | UN Peacekeeping, UK Military, NATO, ODI Facilitator: Walt |
| 14.30–15.00 | Coffee | | |
| 15.00–16.30 Session V | Lessons learning and engagement | How are lessons learned from experience? To what extent can there be further cross-pollination between policy and academia | All – Facilitator: David |

Organisational Approaches to PoC

Question: What process do protection organisations undertake to arrive at an understanding of the root causes of violence against civilians, and possible strategies of humanitarian protection?

Description: This session seeks to reflect on definitional approaches to civilian protection, and the extent to which approaches are influenced by:

- The Nature of the intervening organisation
- The experiences it has had in terms of deployment
- The context in which it works
- Its leadership (norm entrepreneurs)

Additionally, how the organisations view civilian protection in terms of action:

- Whether CP is undertaken by the organisation directly
- If CP is related to harm mitigation from the intervening organisation
- The extent to which organisations exist to facilitate local actors' CP efforts

Challenges of horizontal coordination

Question: What challenges exist when intervening organisations with different approaches/priorities towards civilian protection engage in a post conflict environment?

Description: This session seeks to identify how organisations understand each others' protection mandates, and the extent that this knowledge shapes responses to CP. Such interaction can take place in the field, at national headquarters, or in a home country. The session also asks what forms of formal and informal interaction exists between organisations to facilitate the shaping of CP strategies?

Challenges of vertical coordination: the local

Question: How do local perspectives/experiences of local actors influence the development of policy and practice?

Description: This is the first session which looks specifically at how local actors engage with CP activities. Such actors can be national governments, security forces, local politicians and policymakers, civil society groups, or civilians acting in an informal capacity. The session asks how the interaction with such groups brings opportunities and challenges for change in policy.

Challenges of vertical coordination: the strategic

Question: To what extent do strategic-level developments change or alter policy? how do these match local needs and desires

Description: This second session looks to shifts in the strategic policy landscape, and how this influences the organisations' approach to civilian protection. Such changes could be initiatives in multilateral organisations, governmental action plans, donor funding priorities, or a change in personalities in key positions.

Lessons learning and engagement

Question: How are lessons learned from experience? To what extent can there be further cross-pollination between policy and academia

Description: This session looks firstly to the feedback loop from the experiences organisations have had in deployment zones. To what extent have staff with experience of CP activities fed back into the design of policy and practice, and what opportunities exist to capture these experiences. Secondly the session seeks to identify avenues of cooperation with outside actors – in this case, academia is highlighted but other constituent groups can be considered (journalists, security professionals for instance).

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Towards Hybridity in the Protection of Civilians

Economic and Social Research Council & Irish Research Council
Joint funded networking project

Workshop 3: Dublin City University

Room Q305, third floor, Business School, Glasnevin Campus, Dublin (see [map](#))

PROGRAMME

All times are Irish/British Summer Time (GMT+1)

Version 2.0 (19 Aug 22)

| Monday 22nd August 2022 | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Time | Session | Title | Facilitator/speaker/ type of input | Notes |
| 13.30 – 14.30 | Arrivals and sandwich lunch | | | |
| 14.30 – 15.45 | Session 1 | Introductions: Key turning points in the evolution of civilian protection | Facilitation: David Curran Input: open discussion – look to encourage people to reflect, and map what brings change in the field of protection. | As well as the group introductions, this session will identify where those who work in PoC have seen as the key turning points in how the field has developed. The aim is to get differing perspectives as to the defining changes of PoC in each participant's work/field of research. |
| 15.45 – 16.00 | Coffee | | | |

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|---------------|------------------------------|--|--|---|
| 16.00 – 17.30 | Session 2 | How to communicate PoC to colleagues and partners | <p>Facilitation: Walt Kilroy</p> <p>Input: Conor Foley (Independent consultant - Has worked with the UN in monitoring/ evaluation, and with PoC) <i>Online</i></p> <p>Eileen Morrow (Senior Policy & Advocacy Officer: Humanitarian Coordination; International Council of Voluntary Agencies)</p> <p><i>(Potentially Gemma Davies from ODI online)</i></p> <p>All 5 minute starter pieces</p> | <p>The aim of this session is to identify how within organisations, concepts of civilian protection are created, shared, understood and contested.</p> <p>In our previous workshop (at KCL) we identified that organisationally, civilian protection does not always act as a bedrock for the organisations activities. This leads to the question as to whether organisations start with a culture of civilian protection, or is it a 'bolt on' to existing policies and approaches? What effect does this have on working with those in conflict zones who engage in civilian protection? Additionally, do we have to convince others within our own organisations who are reluctant to develop understanding on this. What tools do we use? is it top-down or bottom up?</p> |
| 19.30 | Dinner in city centre | <p>Market Bar</p> <p>14A Fade St, Dublin 2, Dublin D02 A368 (off South Great Georges Street)</p> | | <p>Taxis organised from DCU to Market Bar.</p> <p>Participants make their own way back.</p> |

Tuesday 23rd August 2022

| Time | Session | Title | Facilitator/speaker/ type of input | Notes |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 09.30 – 11.00 | Session 3 (Hybrid session) | New challenges and alternative perspectives | <p>Facilitation: Roger Mac Ginty</p> <p>Input: Nancy Annan – (Coventry University - unarmed protection in Cameroon) <i>Online</i> Laura Cuzzuol (Gender and PoC issues) <i>Online</i> Alex Gilder (Reading University - international law and stabilisation) Janet Craven: (ICRC - principled humanitarian action, IHL and urban warfare) Starter pieces (5 mins each)</p> | <p>This session is used to better understand our blind spots and future policy areas in the discussions about civilian protection. As this is the third of three workshops, a lot of ground has been covered. Yet we know there are areas which are yet to be explored further in developing the links between civilian protection and hybridity. This asks us to speculate as to the challenges which are emerging and the different lenses in which we can deepen our understanding of PoC.</p> |
| 11.00 – 11.15 | Coffee | | | |
| 11.15 – 12.30 | Session 4 (Hybrid session) | Developments at UN level | <p>Facilitation: Walt Kilroy</p> <p>Input: Anna Mulligan (International Security Policy Unit, DFAT) Lt. Col. Timothy O'Brien (Defence Forces Ireland, former UNIFIL) 10 minute presentations</p> | <p>This session focusses on developments in civilian protection from those who have worked inside the UN System. For 2021-22 Ireland has been a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. This period has seen a number of critical developments in the UN, and Ireland has taken the lead on particular initiatives including Climate and Security, and transitions in UN Peacekeeping operations. Moreover, Ireland has a long history of engagement in peacekeeping, and Irish participation in UNIFIL (Lebanon) has provided a unique perspective on civilian protection.</p> |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--|---|--|
| 12.30 – 13.30 Lunch | | | | |
| 13.30 – 14.45 | Session 5 | Developing training and learning on PoC | <p>Facilitation: David Curran</p> <p>Input: David O'Shaughnessy (Commandant, UN Training School. Ireland)</p> <p>10 minutes on reflections on training military peacekeepers on PoC</p> | The final session is linked to the project's aim to build a coherent learning tool for teachers and educators who wish to focus on civilian protection. The session asks how do we engage in teaching others about protection? What are the challenges of training and education in this particular field. The session will engage with academic and non-academic perspectives on this topic area. |
| 14.45 – 15.00 Coffee | | | | |
| 15.00 – 16.00 | Session 6 | Wrap up and reflections | David/Walt/Roger | This final session to identify unanswered questions, as well as identifying challenges which we want to take on into future research in this area. |

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