

## Lesson 2.4



# Protection of Civilians

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### Aim, Relevance and Learning Outcomes

#### Aim

To explain the duties of UN peacekeeping personnel in the protection of civilians (POC) as a whole-of-mission responsibility, following the legal framework and roles.

#### Relevance

**POC is a priority mandate in peacekeeping. Nearly all peacekeepers are deployed in missions with a POC mandate.**

You are likely to be deployed to a mission with a POC mandate. This means you will be expected to prevent and deter threats. You will also be expected to respond when you see potential threats and when these become real. The Security Council asks missions with POC mandates to develop comprehensive strategies to protect civilians. POC should be a priority in decisions about the use of capacity and resources.

This lesson explains how **all peacekeeping personnel share responsibility and work together in implementing the POC mandate and strategy.** Protecting civilians requires effort from the whole mission. Each part contributes specific expertise. The military component has a unique role in providing physical protection, which includes the use of force as a last resort. However, it can also play a critical role in protection through dialogue and engagement, as well as the (re-)establishment of a protective environment.

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#### Aim

- To explain the duties of UN peacekeeping personnel in protection of civilians (POC) as a whole-of-mission responsibility, following the legal framework and roles

#### Relevance

- POC is a priority mandate in peacekeeping. Nearly all peacekeepers are deployed in missions with a POC mandate.
- You may be deployed to a mission with a POC mandate. You are expected to prevent and deter threats.
- You are also expected to respond when you see potential threats, and when these become real.

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## Learning Outcomes

Learners will be able to:

1. Explain the protection of civilians (POC) mandate.
2. List examples of threats civilians face in armed conflict.
3. Describe the range of protection partners who operate alongside UN peacekeeping operations.
4. List actions to implement the POC mandate.

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#### Learning Outcomes

1. Explain the protection of civilians (POC) mandate.
2. List examples of threats civilians face in armed conflict.
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## Lesson at a Glance



**Minimum lesson duration: 45 minutes** (including Learning Activity 2.4.1).

The Lesson	Pages	Slides
Required Learning Activity 2.4.1: Standard Mandate Language for Protection of Civilians	4–5	3
Definitions	5–12	4-9
Importance of the Protection of Civilians	12–13	10
Legal Framework for Protection of Civilians (POC)	14–15	11
Protection Partners	15–17	12
Department of Peace Operations (DPO) Policy and Guidance on POC in UN Peacekeeping	17–20	13–14
Operational Concept of POC	20–22	15
Implementing the POC Mandate	22–26	16–18
Partners in POC	26–28	19
In-Mission Roles and Responsibilities	28–32	20–21
What Individual Peacekeepers Can Do	32-33	22
Lesson Closing	34	23
<b>Handout - Summary of Key Messages</b>	<b>35-36</b>	<b>-</b>

### Optional Learning Activities

Optional Learning Activity 2.4.2: Vulnerability and Threats	<i>See 2.4 Learning Support</i>
Optional Learning Activity 2.4.3: Mandate Language on Protection of Civilians – Example of MINUSCA 2023	



**Trainer Tips:** Make clear links between the protection of civilians (POC) as a mandated task and the content in Lessons 2.3 Human Rights; 2.4 Protection of Civilians; 2.5 Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, and 2.6 Child Protection. See 2.4 Learning Support for learning activities and learning evaluation questions

### The Lesson



**Trainer Tips:** Use introductory slides to open the lesson. Reinforce links made in the Introduction to Module 2 and Lessons 2.1 and 2.2 between POC as a mandated task and other mandated tasks, particularly those that directly relate to the protection mandate. Reinforce the point that these mandated tasks respond to all acts of violence or abuses committed against civilians in situations of armed conflict.

Linkages include similarities in international law, resolutions, activities, rising threats through targeting of civilians by armed groups in violent conflict, roles of mission personnel and other partners. Draw learners' attention to the Case Study on POC, which is the basis of the Integrated Learning Activity in Lesson 2.10.

## Required Learning Activity 2.4.1

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**Required Learning Activity 2.4.1: Standard Mandate Language for Protection of Civilians**

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**Purpose:** To clarify and deepen understanding of mandated tasks carried out by UN peacekeeping missions

**Time:** 12 minutes

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**Required Learning Activity 2.4.1: Standard Mandate Language for Protection of Civilians**

<b>Method:</b>	Analysis of standard mandate language on POC
<b>Purpose:</b>	To deepen learners understanding of language used by the UN Security Council to mandate tasks relating to POC and ensure learners are clear on mandate language and specific meanings and able to translate it and POC tasks to their own role as peacekeepers
<b>Time:</b>	10–12 minutes

See 2.4 Learning Support for instructions.

## Definitions

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**Definitions**

**Protection of Civilians Mandate**

*“...without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the host State, integrated and coordinated activities by all civilian and uniformed mission components to prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians within the mission’s capabilities and areas of deployment through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force”*

*UN DPO Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping (Ref.2023.05)*

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**Key Message 1:** Protection is a broad idea. The protection of civilians (POC) mandate in UN peacekeeping focuses on protecting civilians from threats of physical violence.

We will now consider the POC mandate in its original words and then break it down to ensure we fully understand each part.

The POC mandate in UN peacekeeping is defined as:

*"...without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the host State, integrated and coordinated activities by all civilian and uniformed mission components to prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians within the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force".*

*UN DPO Policy on The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping (Ref.2023.05)*

Each phrase in the POC definition has an important meaning:

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**Definitions**

*"without prejudice to the responsibility of the host government"*

*"threats of physical violence against civilians"*

*"all necessary means"*

*"up to and including the use of deadly force"*

*"within capabilities"*

*UN DPO Policy on the Protection of Civilians in  
United Nations Peacekeeping (Ref.2023.05)*

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### **"Without prejudice to the responsibility of the host State"**

- This highlights that the government of a State has the primary responsibility to protect the civilians inside its borders. The presence of a UN peacekeeping mission does not change this responsibility.

### **"Threats of physical violence against civilians"**

- Such threats include all hostile acts or situations which are likely to lead to death or serious injury of civilians, including sexual violence, regardless of the source of the threat. The term threat includes both violence that is already happening and violence that seems likely to happen.

***"All necessary means"***

- This authorizes a mission to use any way it needs to protect civilians under threat. Similar terms include necessary action and all necessary measures and resources.

***"Up to and including the use of deadly force"***

- This means that all a contingent's resources can be used. They should be used gradually, along a continuum of three broad levels. The first is physical authoritative presence, meaning being visibly present in the area of the threat, progressing to the second, which is non-deadly force, and finally to the third level, the use of deadly force.

***"Within capabilities"***

- This recognizes that no UN peacekeeping mission can address all threats to civilians. Missions must prioritize resources, prevention and response based on analysis, following the operational concept introduced later in the lesson (three tiers).

**Approach to Putting the Definition into Practice**

Military and police operations for POC must take a proactive approach, using preventive or pre-emptive measures. These measures are coordinated with the full range of civilian, police and military protection advisers.

A proactive approach can deter threats. It builds confidence with the civilian population. Peacekeepers must actively manage and control situations, rather than simply reacting. They need to address threats before they become critical. Prevention remains the most effective and sustainable form of protecting civilians.

Despite a mission's best efforts, military or police operations can harm civilians even when they do not mean to. For this reason, steps should be taken to minimize and mitigate potential harm. Local civilian and police protection experts being included and actively involved in the military planning process can help a lot to reduce harm caused to civilians.

When conducting operations, military, and police personnel, under the rules of engagement (ROE) or directives on the use of force (DUF), must take the utmost care to avoid harming civilians or damaging civilian property or assets. Commanders at all levels should regularly make personnel aware of what is contained in ROE and DUF. They should also carefully control the appropriate and proportionate use of force.

After major operations, missions must conduct an after-action review (AAR) with relevant mission components including the POC adviser or focal point, the best practices officer, the gender unit and the human rights component.

After-action reviews (AARs):

- Are part of the knowledge management approach of the Department of Peace Operations (DPO)
- Identify key lessons that inform future operations and provide recommendations on mitigating any negative effects of previous actions.



**Trainer Tips:** Brainstorm with participants the meaning of civilian. Use the key points noted to bridge into the rest of the lesson.

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**Who is a Civilian?**

- Everyone is considered a civilian, except:
  - Members of the armed forces
  - Members of an organized armed group with continuous combat function
  - Civilians directly participating in hostilities
- If you are unsure if someone is a civilian, that person shall be considered a civilian



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For purposes of the POC mandate in peacekeeping, everyone is considered a civilian **except:**

- Members of the armed forces;
- Members of an organized armed group with a continuous combat function (i.e. who take part in fighting without interruption)
- Civilians directly participating in hostilities while they are fighting.

If it is not clear whether someone is a civilian or not, that person is considered a civilian. Missions strive to restore security for all civilians. Peacekeeping personnel pay special attention to the protection needs of vulnerable people and groups.

Those most likely to be targets of violence include:

- Children
- Women
- Ethnic or religious minorities

- Refugees
- Internally displaced people
- People living with disabilities
- Wounded people
- Elderly people.

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**Threats to Civilians**

**Real or potential violations to the right to life and physical integrity, such as attempts to:**

- Kill, torture or maim
- Forcibly displace
- Starve or pillage
- Commit acts of sexual violence
- Abduct or arbitrarily detain
- Recruit by force

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**Key Message 2:** A threat is a person or thing likely to cause damage or danger. A protection of civilians (POC) threat is anything that places civilians at risk of injury or harm.

### Threats to Civilians

- Threats to civilians can come from any party to the conflict. They are threats of death, injury or other harm.



#### Examples – Attempts to:

- Kill, torture or permanently damage a part of the body (maim)
- Force people to move to another area (forcibly displace)
- Deprive of food (starve) or rob (pillage)
- Commit acts of sexual violence
- Abduct or imprison without reason
- Recruit by force.

- Real or potential physical harm to civilians can also be associated with **lawful actions by State or international security forces**, as defined in international humanitarian law (IHL).
- Real or potential physical harm to civilians can come from mines, unexploded ordinance (UXO) or improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

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### Threats to Civilians

**Threats can come from State and non-State actors such as:**

- Non-State armed groups
- Self-defence groups
- Security or defence forces of the host State
- State agents and State-sponsored armed actors
- Violent extremist groups

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**Threats can come from State and non-State actors.** Groups who can pose a threat include:

- Non-State armed groups
- Self-defence groups
- Security or defence forces of the host State
- State agents and State-sponsored armed actors (including private military security contractors who provide armed services for payment)
- Violent extremist groups.

Violence against civilians has two main motives:

- **Opportunity** (i.e. because it is easy). This is random violence resulting from the lack of law and order in conflict and early post-conflict situations.
- To **move forward the strategic plans** of the people carrying out the violence. These plans can be political, economic, religious or military. This violence targets specific individuals or communities. Its targets may be ethnic, racial, sexual, religious or political groups, specific communities or people from particular geographical regions.

To prevent and deter threats to civilians, uniformed mission components must think and behave proactively.

### **It can be particularly challenging when State security forces are a threat to civilians.**

A robust UN military or police response may result in political fallout or insecurity for peacekeeping personnel. Nonetheless, UN military units, often working together with UN police, must act quickly and decisively, following mission-specific ROEs and DUF. They must use all necessary means to protect civilians, even when the host State's security forces are failing to protect civilians or are themselves the source of the threat. Missions should also work to build the capacity of host State authorities to protect civilians. This is the only lasting way to protect civilians. Partnerships with host State authorities must follow the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (see *Lesson 2.3 Human Rights*).



**Trainer Tips:** As part of preparation for Module 2 and this lesson, identify participants or available experts who have POC experience in UN peacekeeping missions. Invite them to share those experiences and highlight the reality of and challenges to POC in a real-life mission context.

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#### Vulnerability Factors

- Individual/community factors
- Environmental factors
- Access to assistance
- Self-sufficiency



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**Key Message 3:** People are vulnerable when they are open or susceptible to harm. Protection strategies and individual, community and environmental factors, can change the vulnerability of civilians.

Vulnerability factors include but are not limited to:

- Individual/community factors
  - Age, gender, sex, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation and social status.
- Environmental factors
  - Geographical location, level of urbanization, proximity and capacity of State authority in the area, level of infrastructure and communication.
- Access to assistance
  - Ability to access services and interact.
- Self-sufficiency
  - Ability of communities to be active agents in their own protection. This can also include early warning capacities.

All strategies, actions, plans and programmes related to the implementation of the POC mandate must take into account differences in status and power between groups, for example, between men and women and adults and children.

## Importance of the Protection of Civilians

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### Importance of Protecting Civilians

- Civilians are increasingly and deliberately targeted during armed conflict
- Women and children suffer disproportionately



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**Key Message 4:** More and more, civilians are deliberately targeted during armed conflict.

People who participate in violent conflict increasingly target civilians on purpose. In response, the Security Council can mandate UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKOs) to protect civilians from physical violence.



**Trainer Tips:** Consider using the MINUSCA mandate on POC from 2023 as the basis of a quick learning activity with the participant group. The mandate text is provided in Learning Activity 2.4.3 in the Learning Support.

*Note that the mandate on POC is not short, which is evidence of the increasing emphasis and specificity the Security Council is applying to this mandated task.*

*Depending on the size of the group, distribute copies of the example and ask different groups to focus on specific assigned parts and report back to the plenary group on specifics.*

*Guiding questions:*

- *What do group members understand the assigned part of the mandated POC task to mean, specifically? What specific threats does it address?*
- *What other content covered so far in pre-deployment training reinforces this mandate?*
- *Based on the experiences of group members and the training so far, which mission components and functions can participants identify that contribute to the implementation of the POC mandate?*
- *Use the text of the mandate as well as the lesson to reinforce key messages. Refer back to the mandate when you cover the legal framework for protection of civilians, as the mandate is part of that framework.*

## Legal Framework for Protection of Civilians



**Trainer Tips:** Module 1 introduced the legal framework for UN peacekeeping. Remind participants of that content. The same international laws apply in POC. Brainstorm as a recap.

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**Legal framework for POC**

- International law
- Security Council resolutions
- National laws



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**Key Message 5:** International law obligates UN peacekeeping operations to protect civilians in conflict.

The framework of international law that obligates UN peacekeeping operations to protect civilians in conflict includes:

- The Charter of the United Nations
- IHL
- International human rights law (IHRL)
- International refugee law.

National laws of the host country can further guide the implementation of POC mandates. The Security Council has passed many resolutions that condemn the targeting of civilians in armed conflict. POC has been an important item on the Security Council agenda since 1999. The UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), established that year, was the first UN peacekeeping mission given a specific POC mandate. This reflected growing concern about the negative impact of conflict on civilians. The POC mandate reinforces a mission's mandate to promote and protect human rights. It also complements and supports mandates on other cross-cutting and thematic tasks, such as:

- Human rights
- Child protection
- Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)
- Women, peace and security (WPS)
- Creating an environment in which humanitarian aid can be delivered.

Mandated tasks should be planned to work well together, and the experts within the mission must be included to ensure coordinated responses.

## Protection Partners

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### Protection Partners

**Primary responsibility:**

- Host State government

**Other protection partners:**

- Local communities
- UN partners – UNHCR, OHCHR, OCHA, UNICEF
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Non-UN military forces
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations – national, international

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**Key Message 6:** Protection of civilians (POC) is not solely a UN peacekeeping responsibility. **The host State government always has primary responsibility to protect civilians inside its borders.** The UN peacekeeping mission and partners coordinate and support the host State on POC.

### Diverse Partners in POC

**Local communities:** Communities can be active in their own protection. Interventions by peacekeeping personnel need to strengthen what local communities are already doing.

**UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees):** UNHCR staff work in host communities and camps for refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs). They help with legal, material and physical protection and minimize potential threats of violence to all displaced people. They also try to provide shelter, food, water and medical care. UNHCR also normally leads the protection work of the UN Country Team.

**OHCHR (Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights):** OHCHR promotes and protects human rights. It integrates human rights into all UN work in the host country. OHCHR works with DPO on human rights in peacekeeping operations. This includes setting up the human rights component in missions. It guides and supports implementation of human rights mandates.

**OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs):** OCHA supports and provides tools and services to help humanitarian organizations to respond effectively to the needs of people in crises, to understand and analyse their needs, and to mobilize international assistance. OCHA:

- Alerts and informs humanitarian organizations in times of crisis
- Ensures humanitarian organizations have the funds and resources they need to respond during emergencies
- Leads the development of humanitarian policies
- Campaigns for the rights of people affected by humanitarian crises.

**UNICEF (UN Children’s Fund):** UNICEF works in child protection, preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse. UNICEF monitors and reports on IHL and human rights abuses and violations of children in conflict. UNICEF is normally the UN lead on child protection.

**ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross):** ICRC is the guardian of IHL. ICRC’s mission is to: “protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence, and to provide them with assistance” (ICRC Protection Policy, p. 1).

**Non-UN military forces:** The Security Council may approve the deployment of parallel forces from a single government or a regional organization.



### **Example – CAR and Mali**

Central African Republic and Mali, where there were deployments of non-UN military forces from an individual Member State (France) and a regional organization (African Union). Parallel forces can deploy more quickly than the UN, so are often able to end spiralling violence before a UN peacekeeping mission arrives.

**Non-governmental and civil society organizations:** These partners help protect civilians. They deliver humanitarian aid, monitor and report on human rights abuses and help reform judicial institutions. These organizations can be national or international.



**Trainer Tips:** Ask participants which of these partners they recall from earlier lessons in Module 2 or from Module 1. By this point in a pre-deployment training using the Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials (CPTM), learners can be reasonably expected to know more about the role of different partners and their importance. Prompt them to recall specifics. If they cannot do so, consider assigning self-directed learning to fill gaps.

## Department of Peace Operations (DPO) Policy and Guidance on POC in UN Peacekeeping



**Trainer Tips:** A comprehensive set of principles guide mandated POC. Invite learners to brainstorm these principles. Note down the key points they raise.

Depending on the size of the group, do this in plenary or divide learners into small groups and ask each group to create as long a list of relevant principles as they can.

Let learners know the reference list has 14 items on it, so they have a goal.

Informally reward or give a prize to the group with the longest correct list. Some principles draw directly from UN peacekeeping and its history.

Others relate to the approach that the UN takes to POC work.

Use the list of principles to prompt learners if they are not able to identify types of or specific points.

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**Guiding Principles on POC**

1. Grounded in international law
2. A priority mandate
3. Primary responsibility of the host State
4. In harmony with the principles of peacekeeping
5. Under effective leadership, command and control
6. An active duty to protect
7. A whole-of-mission activity

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**Key Message 7:** The Department of Peace Operations (DPO) provides guidance and policy on protection of civilians that apply to all missions with a protection of civilians (POC) mandate.

### Principles

POC in peacekeeping is guided by the principles below.

1. **Grounded in international law:** POC mandates show the global community's commitment to prevent violations of international law.
2. **A priority mandate:** POC must be prioritized in decisions regarding the allocation and use of available capabilities and resources.
3. **Primary responsibility of the host State:** The host State always has primary responsibility to protect civilians on its territory. POC activities and work of UN peacekeeping missions will, as far as possible, support the host State's POC efforts. However, the mission may act independently to protect civilians when the host State is deemed unable or unwilling to do so, or where government forces themselves are a threat to civilians.
4. **In agreement with the principles of peacekeeping:** UN peacekeeping operations are guided by three interrelated and mutually reinforcing principles:
  - Consent of the parties
  - Impartiality
  - Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

POC is fully in agreement with these principles. **As such, no excuse exists for failure to protect civilians.**

5. **Under effective leadership, command and control:** Senior leaders in missions and in UN Headquarters are ultimately accountable for POC mandate implementation. They must set the strategic direction and ensure accountability for effective delivery by all mission components. Uniformed components follow the rules and directives set by the force commander and police commissioner. Contingent commanders ensure all under their command understand and comply with these and the POC policy.
6. **An active duty to protect:** All mission components must constantly work to prevent, pre-empt and respond to threats to civilians. They cannot only react to attacks. Activities to protect civilians must be planned, deliberate and ongoing, drawing on dialogue and engagement.
7. **A whole-of-mission activity:** POC requires a coordinated, integrated approach involving civilian and uniformed components, prioritizing POC activities across workplans, training and evaluations.

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2.4 Protection of Civilians

**Guiding Principles on POC**

8. A coordinated approach
9. Undertaken in cooperation with humanitarian and development actors and in respect of humanitarian principles
10. A tailored, community-based approach
11. Gender-responsive
12. Undertaken with mainstreamed child protection concerns
13. Do no harm
14. Enabled by technology and informed by data

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8. **A coordinated approach:** Peacekeeping operations coordinate with various protection actors, sharing information to optimize engagement at local, national, regional and international levels.
9. **Undertaken in cooperation with humanitarian and development actors and respecting humanitarian principles:** Close coordination with humanitarian and development agencies is essential, respecting their principles and maintaining a clear distinction between roles.
10. **A tailored, community-based approach:** Actions, plans and programmes to protect civilians must involve ongoing, meaningful engagement with local communities, considering their diverse needs. This includes consultation with women, men, girls and boys; empowering local actors and organizations; and supporting ways of protecting civilians that already exist. POC analysis and planning must address the varying needs and threats faced by different groups of civilians. Community engagement, supported by community liaison assistants (CLAs), should occur at every stage of implementation. Carrying out POC work should include a plan on how to later pass the work on to the community or a third party.
11. **Gender-responsive:** All strategies, actions, plans and programmes related to the implementation of the POC mandate must be gender-responsive. This means understanding the gendered differences in status and power that means that women and men and girls and boys need to be protected in different ways. Gender-responsive POC takes account of these differences. It changes POC efforts to respond to or eliminate a threat or mitigate the risk to civilians whatever their gender.
12. **Child protection concerns are to be mainstreamed:** The specific protection needs of children (boys and girls) must be considered and responded to when implementing the POC mandate, including by mainstreaming child protection considerations into joint analysis (threat assessments, early warning), information-sharing, joint planning and community engagement.

13. **Do no harm:** All mission components must be careful not to expose civilians they engage with to risk or harm. This could include exposing civilians to possible reprisals for cooperation with the mission. Confidentiality must be respected, informed consent for reporting abuses and violations must be obtained and measures must be taken to reduce any harm during operations.
14. **Enabled by technology and informed by data:** New technologies can help peacekeepers anticipate, prevent and respond to threats to civilians. They can also help to better engage local populations. POC should be at the centre of decisions related to the deployment and tasking of assets, and in the acquisition, analysis and sharing of derived information.

## Operational Concept of POC

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**Operational Concept of POC – three tiers**

- POC is implemented through three tiers, simultaneously and with no inherent hierarchy
- All mission components have a role to play in each tier

<b>Tier I</b>	<b>Tier II</b>	<b>Tier III</b>
Protection through dialogue and engagement	Provision of physical protection	Establishment of a protective environment

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**Key Message 8:** Protection of civilians (POC) is implemented through three tiers. All the tiers are worked on at the same time and all are equally important. All mission components have a role to play in each tier.

- Tier I: Protection through dialogue and engagement
- Tier II: Provision of physical protection
- Tier III: Establishment of a protective environment.

Peacekeeping operations mandated to protect civilians use a range of instruments and approaches. These are categorized in three tiers as shown on the slide. The three tiers accommodate and reinforce one another. All the tiers are worked on at the same time. The tiers implemented strategically in accordance with the mission mandate, mission phase and circumstances on the ground.

All the tiers are equally important and have no fixed order. The POC mandate is implemented at all levels of peacekeeping missions. All mission components have a key role to play in each tier. All action focuses on prevention and pre-emption. The primary responsibility of the host State to protect civilians is also central.

Across all three tiers, UN peacekeepers use armed and unarmed approaches to protect civilians. Unarmed approaches to protection (UAP) include the full range of protection activities undertaken by civilian and uniformed personnel that do not rely on military power or the threat or use of force. UAP should be carried out as part of a larger comprehensive and integrated approach that includes high level political engagement. It needs to be backed up by the threat or use of force by uniformed peacekeepers.

### **Tier I: Protection through dialogue and engagement**

Tier I activities include:

- Active, structured and regular dialogue with those who are or who could be violent towards civilians
- Conflict resolution and mediation between parties to the conflict
- Encouraging the host government, its security institutions and other relevant actors to intervene to protect civilians
- Local conflict resolution and social cohesion activities
- Strategic communication
- Investigation
- Advocacy
- Reconciliation initiatives
- Reporting on human rights and protection concerns
- Other initiatives that seek to protect civilians through communication, dialogue and engagement.

### **Tier II: Provision of physical protection**

Tier II includes activities by all mission components to physically protect civilians, whether through protective presence, inter-positioning, the threat or use of force, enabling safe travel or offering shelter.

Tier II includes activities by uniformed components involving the show or use of force to prevent, deter, pre-empt and respond to threats to civilians. However, civilian mission components can also act as a protective presence through their regular, visible and direct engagement with civilian populations at risk.

### **Tier III Establishment of a protective environment**

Tier III activities are frequently programmatic (i.e. operational and time-limited activities that support mandate implementation). They are designed with committed resources for peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

Tier III activities are sometimes presented as separate mandated tasks under country-specific resolutions. They help create a protective environment for civilians, prevent the (re-)emergence of threats of physical violence, support the legitimacy of the host State and its capacity to protect civilians, and support the establishment or re-establishment of the rule of law and criminal justice chain.

## Implementing the POC Mandate



**Trainer Tips:** Recap the following definitions.

- **Threat:** a person or thing which causes harm.
- **Vulnerability:** a weakness which makes one open or susceptible to harm.
- **Risk:** the likelihood of a threat occurring as a result of vulnerabilities.

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**POC Threat and Risk Assessment**

**Missions should assess:**

- Existing and likely threats
- Communities at risk
- Mission capacity
- The capacity of other protection actors
- Comparative advantage of the mission

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**Key Message 9:** Peacekeeping personnel need to eliminate threats and reduce risks to civilians. Missions conduct regular threat assessments to anticipate and prevent violence before it occurs. They then plan a timely and thorough response.

### POC Threat and Risk Assessment

As part of the threat assessment and prioritization process, missions should assess:

- Existing and likely threats

- Communities at risk
- Mission capacity
- The capacity of other protection actors
- How much stronger the mission is than the threats it may face.

Priority strategic threats should be agreed by mission leadership and detailed in a POC threat matrix, which should be regularly reviewed at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Threats to civilians will be evaluated on an ongoing, daily basis by company operating cases and temporary operating bases.

A strategic and comprehensive POC threat assessment and prioritization process should normally be undertaken by the POC coordination forums and mechanisms established by the mission.

POC coordination mechanisms should include representatives from all relevant mission components and, where appropriate, the UN Country Team. They should ensure that relevant factors (political, security, gender, human rights, etc.) are considered when assessing and prioritizing threats to civilians.

Proper integration of the various types of information into the POC threat assessment depends on adequate information-sharing among relevant components responsible for collecting or analysing the information.

As part of the threat assessment process, missions should identify which civilians are at risk from each threat and develop an understanding of the impact of a conflict on different parts of the civilian population that also picks up on the small and subtle details of this impact.

Once threats to civilians have been identified, the mission should evaluate the level of risk faced by the civilian population for each threat. This means they have to estimate how likely the threat is to be realised and how civilians would be affected by it. In assessing impact, the mission should consider the scale, gravity, intensity, regularity and systematic nature of the violence.

When deciding how to respond to a specific threat to civilians, the mission should take into account:

- The nature of the threat and risk to civilians associated with it.
- The ability and willingness of the host State to respond to the threat.
- The mission's ability to address the threat, whether unilaterally or jointly with other protection actors.
- The comparative advantages and expected impact the mission may have in mitigating or eliminating the threat.
- The possible negative consequences of the mission's actions or inactions. A mission's actions can lead to direct or indirect harm to civilians, possible political fallout or retaliatory attacks. Inaction can also result in civilian harm, a loss of legitimacy and diminished ability to deter. Both action and inaction may result in heightened insecurity for peacekeepers and civilians.

Slide 17



2.4 Protection of Civilians

**POC Response Planning**

**Risk = Likelihood x Impact**

LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT				
	INSIGNIFICANT	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	SEVERE
Almost Certain	Medium	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
Likely	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
Possible	Medium	Medium	High	High	Extreme
Unlikely	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
Rare	Low	Low	Medium	High	High

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Slide 17 shows how to evaluate the risk of each threat to civilians. This considers both how likely the threat is to happen and the impact on the population if it does. The red zone shows the highest level of risk to civilians. Other risks may be likely but have a smaller impact (yellow) or be less likely but have a more serious impact (orange).

Slide 18



2.4 Protection of Civilians

**POC Response Planning**

**The mission POC strategy:**

- Sets out the required strategic objectives
- Assesses threats, risks and capacity
- Sets priorities when there are multiple threats
- Defines the mission approach, activities, roles and responsibilities for POC

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**Key Message 10:** Protection of civilians (POC) mandated missions develop a POC strategy to:

- Carry out (operationalize) the POC mandate
- Coordinate mission response to threats of violence to civilians.

The mission’s POC strategy:

- Sets out the required strategic objectives
- Assesses threats, risks and capacity
- Prioritizes among threats
- Defines the mission approach, activities, roles and responsibilities for POC
- Defines coordination mechanisms both internally and with other actors.

The mission’s POC strategy must be integrated into mission planning documents, including the mission concept, strategy and plan, in component/section level planning documents, conflict analysis, results-based budget and performance assessment, as appropriate.

### In-Mission Coordination on POC

All missions with a POC mandate shall establish POC planning and coordination forums at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. In addition to all relevant mission components (civilian, police and military), these forums should include, as appropriate, OCHA and protection agencies. Where relevant, other representatives of the UN Country Team and humanitarian actors may also be included.

These mechanisms will serve as forums for information-sharing and analysis, planning, decision-making, implementation and monitoring and reporting POC activities. Missions should adapt coordination mechanisms to their specific contexts and requirements.

## Partners in POC

### Slide 19



<b>POC Partners</b>	
National Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political engagements</li> <li>• Security sector reform and governance (SSR&amp;G)</li> <li>• Targeted advocacy</li> <li>• Joint operations or joint patrolling</li> </ul>
Local Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue</li> <li>• Mission-wide community engagement</li> <li>• Local protection strategies</li> </ul>
Humanitarian & Development Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic information sharing</li> <li>• Coordination with protection cluster, humanitarian country team and other protection actors</li> </ul>
Non-UN Military Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sharing and operational planning on a case-by-case basis</li> <li>• HOM exchanges and working-level cooperation</li> </ul>



**Key Message 11:** Peacekeeping operations coordinate and cooperate with partners on the protection of civilians (POC). Partners include local communities, national authorities, humanitarian and development actors and non-UN military forces.

### **National Authorities**

As host States have the primary responsibility to protect civilians, missions work with national authorities to strengthen their protection capacities and their political will (support by government decision makers) to protect. This includes cooperation across the three tiers of POC. Activities may include:

- Political engagement
- Security sector reform and governance (SSR&G)
- Targeted advocacy
- Joint operations or joint patrols, applying the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy.

### **Local Communities**

Regular contact and communication with people from local communities is critical to effective POC. Missions need to understand the vulnerabilities of civilians as well as the threat environment. Communities also often have protection capacities that the mission can help strengthen.

Community engagement with a protection focus can happen through:

- Joint protection teams (JPTs)
- CLAs
- Community alert networks
- Local protection strategies.

### **Humanitarian and Development Community**

Effective coordination between the mission and humanitarian and development actors is essential to effective implementation of the POC mandate.

This coordination must be based on respect for the distinct mandates, principles and approaches of peacekeeping operations and humanitarian actors.

Coordination and information-sharing should be close and systematic. It should be conducted through established mechanisms, including the relevant UN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination platforms and UN integrated coordination mechanisms. These mechanisms should be designed for the place the mission is

based because the appropriate levels of interaction, coordination and cooperation will vary between missions.

The aims of coordination and interaction between the mission and humanitarian, development and other protection actors for POC can include, as appropriate:

- Timely sharing of information on threats to civilians, including early warnings
- Timely sharing of analysis on priority protection locations and issues
- Consulting on and sharing POC strategies and priorities
- Referring victims and witnesses to support systems and services
- Developing mutual understanding of approaches and messaging
- Contingency planning for civilian, police and military operations
- Supporting training activities and exercises
- Understanding and deconflicting planned protection activities and interventions
- Addressing the root causes of conflict and violence against civilians
- Conducting joint assessment or joint protection missions
- Ensuring complementary and coordinated strategic communications on POC.

### **Non-UN Military Forces**

Where peacekeeping missions deploy alongside other forces, it is important that they plan and work with each other. Their mandates and capacities will be different.

They will need to coordinate at least in information-sharing and operational planning.

Coordination is case-by-case. Usually, the special representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) / head of mission (HOM) will interact with personnel at the working level cooperation through force Headquarters, the joint mission analysis centre (JMAC) and other uniformed and civilian components.

Peacekeeping operations must respect the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to non-United Nations security forces.



**Trainer Tips:** *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook has examples of partnerships with local and other key partners.*

## In-Mission Roles and Responsibilities

### Slide 20



2.4 Protection of Civilians 

**In-Mission Roles and Responsibilities**

**All mission components are responsible for implement the POC mandate. They include:**

- POC advisors
- Civilian senior mission leaderships
- Force commander
- Police commissioner

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**Key Message 12:** All parts of a mission contribute to protection of civilians (POC) in their daily work, in coordinated ways. Some units have a particular protection focus.



**Trainer Tips:** The DPO Policy on Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping (ref.2023.05) details the roles and responsibilities of all mission components in the POC mandate.



**Key Message 13:** The protection of civilians (POC) adviser advises leadership and ensures a coordinated and integrated approach to POC mandate implementation.

### The **POC adviser:**

- Facilitates the development and implementation of the mission POC strategy
- Updates mission leadership on current and emerging threats against civilians and response options to inform timely decision-making
- Ensures a comprehensive and integrated approach in POC mandate implementation
- Ensures compliance with relevant policies and guidelines
- Provides advice and support to leadership and mission components for POC mandate implementation

- Supports relevant components to ensure that POC is adequately reflected in the planning and execution of mission operations
- Ensures close coordination with relevant partners including development and humanitarian partners
- Ensures that a POC analysis is included in mission planning, performance and reporting systems
- Coordinates the establishment, monitoring and implementation of POC coordination forums
- Supports training, AARs and sharing lessons learned on POC.

**Civilian senior mission leadership** has **overarching responsibility** for POC.

At the **strategic level**, it:

- Ensures that POC is prioritized in key mission documents and plans
- Ensures that the mission has a POC strategy
- Integrates POC into performance assessment frameworks.

At the **political and substantive level**, it:

- Ensures that the political strategy is aligned and complements the POC mandate
- Emphasizes the host government's primary responsibility to protect civilians
- Engages politically to promote protection and prevent threats to civilians.

At the **operational level**, it:

- Ensures coordination and cooperation among all mission components on POC, including for the joint planning and integrated execution of operations
- Ensures training, exercises and contingency planning
- Ensures the establishment and functioning of integrated and gender-responsive mission threat assessments and early warning and response mechanisms
- Ensures that human rights and IHL violations are documented and that they inform early warning analysis, risk and threat assessments as well as strategic and operational planning.

The **force commander**:

- Develops and implements a strategy and operational plans for the military to fulfil its responsibilities for implementing the POC mandate

- Issues, disseminates and ensures compliance and accountability with orders, directives and guidance to implement the POC mandate
- Ensures that sector commanders have developed POC-related plans and issues necessary orders
- Prioritizes resources for POC-related tasks
- Ensures training, readiness and capacity for POC, and addresses gaps as necessary
- Ensures the development, review and revision of contingency plans
- In coordination with police and civilian components, ensures an overall framework for coordination, planning and cooperation between the three components
- Ensures that the force addresses harm to civilians it causes itself and systematically prevents, tracks and mitigates any such harm
- Advocates for and builds capacity on protection, IHL and human rights with host-State counterparts
- Provides information and early warning on threats to civilians and ensures allegations of violations of IHL and human rights are followed up
- Orders the preventive measures to be taken proactively and orders response to early warning
- Ensures that the POC adviser is included in military planning processes.

### The **police commissioner**:

- Develops and implements a strategy and operational plans for the police component to fulfil its responsibilities for implementing the POC mandate
- Ensures that formed police unit (FPU) commanders understand the integrated approach to POC
- Issues and disseminates orders, directives and guidance to implement the POC mandate and ensures compliance and accountability with them
- Prioritizes resources and readiness for POC
- Ensures training, readiness and capacity for POC and to address gaps
- In coordination with military and civilian components, ensures an overall framework for coordination, planning and cooperation between three components
- Ensures the development, review and revision of contingency plans
- Provides information and early warning on threats to civilians and ensures follow-up on allegations of violations of IHL and human rights
- Orders the conduct of proactive preventive measures and response to early warning

- Ensures that the POC adviser is included in police planning processes
- Ensures that the police addresses harm to civilians it causes itself and systematically prevents, tracks and mitigates any such harm
- Advocates and builds capacity on protection, IHL and human rights with host-State counterparts
- Provides information and early warning on threats to civilians and ensures follow-up on allegations of violations of IHL and human rights.

### Special Roles of UN Military and Police

#### Slide 21



2.4 Protection of Civilians 

#### Special Roles of the UN Military and Police

- Physical protection
- Proactive approach
- Monitoring and reporting



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**Key Message 14:** UN military and police are crucial to the protection of civilians (POC). Their special roles include:

- Physical protection
- A proactive approach - patrols, checkpoints, deterrent positions and cordons
- Monitoring and reporting.

### Physical Protection

The military has the lead responsibility in providing physical protection. FPU and civilian components may also support them in this work. The mission's POC adviser should be systematically included in all military and police planning processes.

## Proactive Approach

A robust and proactive approach to POC is the most effective for the police and military in protecting civilians. This means actively controlling situations and addressing threats before they become critical, not only reacting when they are already in progress. **Military and police can prevent and pre-empt harm to civilians through defensive and stabilizing operations.**



### Examples

- Deterrent positions and cordons
- Checkpoints
- Patrols.

These build confidence in the mission. A proactive approach also considers the specific protection needs of all the parts of the population.

## Monitoring and Reporting

Military and police normally have a strong operational presence and can conduct patrolling, staff observation posts and checkpoints, and take part in outreach and meaningful engagement with communities. As such, they play a key role in recording violations and abuses of human rights and sharing early warnings and information on threats to civilians. It is essential that the uniformed components participate and contribute to POC coordination forums and ensure that important information on POC is shared across relevant components.

## What Individual Peacekeepers Can Do

### Slide 22



2.4 Protection of Civilians 

### What Individual Peacekeepers Can Do

- Engage local communities
- Understand POC mandate, environment, threats
- Cooperate with mission components and partners
- Interpret the POC mandate pro-actively, try to prevent threats
- Respond, intervene



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**Key Message 16:** All UN peacekeeping personnel have a duty to protect civilians. Peacekeeping personnel need to be ready to:

- Take action to prevent threats
- Respond when they see potential and real threats
- Work with others in a whole-of-mission approach to protection of civilians (POC).

The actions of individual peacekeeping personnel can have a major impact on POC.

The UN expects all peacekeeping personnel to:

- Follow the UN code of conduct and the mission ROE or DUF
- Take a proactive and preventive approach to POC mandate implementation
- Ensure that community engagement is meaningful and follows the principle of do no harm
- Understand the POC mandate and take an active approach in fulfilling their POC responsibilities
- Ensure integration and coordination in tasks related to POC mandate implementation across the three tiers
- Consider the specific protection needs of all parts of the population.

## Lesson Closing

### Slide 23



**Trainer Tips:** *If you have time, summarize the lesson, recalling the aim and learning objectives. Mention that the key messages support the learning objectives. Ask participants if they have questions. Ensure you distribute the Handout – Summary of Key Messages to all participants.*

## Handout - Summary of Key Messages

**Key Message 1: Protection** is a broad idea. The protection of civilians (POC) mandate in UN peacekeeping focuses on **protecting civilians from threats of physical violence**.

**Key Message 2:** A threat is a person or thing likely to cause damage or danger. A POC threat is anything that places civilians at risk of injury or harm.

**Key Message 3:** People are vulnerable when they are open or susceptible to harm. Protection strategies and individual, community and environmental factors can change the vulnerability of civilians.

**Key Message 4:** More and more, civilians are deliberately targeted during armed conflict.

**Key Message 5:** International law obligates UN peacekeeping operations to protect civilians in conflict.

**Key Message 6:** Protection of civilians (POC) is not solely a UN peacekeeping responsibility. **The host State government always has primary responsibility to protect civilians inside its borders.** The UN peacekeeping mission and partners coordinate and support the host State on POC.

**Key Message 7:** The Department of Peace Operations (DPO) provides guidance and policy on protection of civilians that apply to all missions with a protection of civilians (POC) mandate.

**Key Message 8:** Protection of civilians (POC) is implemented through three tiers. All the tiers are worked on at the same time and all are equally important. All mission components have a role to play in each tier.

- Tier I: Protection through dialogue and engagement
- Tier II: Provision of physical protection
- Tier III: Establishment of a protective environment.

**Key Message 9:** Peacekeeping personnel need to eliminate threats and reduce risks to civilians. Missions conduct regular threat assessments to anticipate and prevent violence before it occurs. They then plan a timely and thorough response.

**Key Message 10:** Protection of civilians (POC) mandated missions develop a POC strategy to:

- Carry out (operationalize) the POC mandate
- Coordinate mission response to threats of violence to civilians.

**Key Message 11:** Peacekeeping operations coordinate and cooperate with partners on the protection of civilians (POC). Partners include local communities, national authorities, humanitarian and development actors and non-UN military forces.

**Key Message 12:** All parts of a mission contribute to protection of civilians (POC) in their daily work, in coordinated ways. Some units have a particular protection focus.

**Key Message 13:** The protection of civilians (POC) adviser advises leadership and ensures a coordinated and integrated approach to POC mandate implementation.

**Key Message 14:** UN military and police are crucial to the protection of civilians (POC). Their special roles include:

- Physical protection
- A proactive approach - patrols, checkpoints, deterrent positions and cordons
- Monitoring and reporting.
- 

**Key Message 15:** Peacekeeping missions have developed a range of tools at the local level to facilitate situational awareness to identify and analyse threats to civilians. Some examples are:

- Community liaison assistants (CLAs)
- Community alert networks (CANs)
- Joint protection teams (JPTs)
- Joint assessment missions
- Community protection plans.

**Key Message 16:** All UN peacekeeping personnel have a duty to protect civilians. Peacekeeping personnel need to be ready to:

- Take action to prevent threats
- Respond when they see potential and real threats
- Work with others in a whole-of-mission approach to protection of civilians (POC).