**Monitoring Armed** 3

**Conflicts**

Monitoring is the long-term observation and analysis of the human rights situation in a country or region. It enables you to build an important data-base that can then be used to gain an understanding of the situation and its evolution in a country or region, to identify patterns of violations, and it permits an informed assessment of individual allegations.

Monitoring consists of a systematic and consistent gather- ing of information that may be related to human rights or humanitarian violations, from a variety of sources.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR MONITORING

* print media
* radio broadcasts
* government statements or reports
* military reports
* statements or reports from armed groups
* NGO reports
* UN Agencies’ reports
* UN Security Council statements
* statements and interviews of witnesses and victims
* individual allegations of human rights violations, etc.

The more detailed and complete your knowledge of the lo- cal and regional political and military climate and changes

to it, legal procedures, military events, structure and com- position of the military forces present, the more informed and empowered you will be to assess allegations of abuse and to establish responsibilities.

Ideally, you should seek to gather information as regularly and from as many sources as possible. Events occur rapidly in war situations, and reports and interpretations of a single event may vary a great deal.

The following is an overview of some of the information you must gather and analyze.

### Status of Women

in the Country or Region

Armed conﬂicts cause dramatic changes and upheavals with- in the regions concerned. These circumstances do not mean, however, that the ‘pre-conﬂict’ situation is irrelevant to your research. To the contrary, information on the ‘pre-conﬂict’ dynamic is essential to retrace the origin of the conﬂict, to determine whether, why and how speciﬁc individuals or communities are being targeted, and to understand the con- sequences of abuse on individuals and communities. From a gender perspective, information on the situation of women in the years or months preceding the outbreak of hostilities may allow you to better understand the impact of the con- ﬂict on the status of women, why women may be speciﬁcally targeted, the consequences of abuse for women, how com- munities may deal with sexual violence, whether there are local or national remedies and infrastructure available to the victims, etc.

The following is a list of possible indicators related to the status of women. It is not exhaustive, and you should feel

free to add any other elements that may be particularly relevant to your countries.

#### International ratiﬁcations and implementation

* + - Ratiﬁcation by the government of instruments such as the ICCPR, the ICESCR and the CAT;
    - Ratiﬁcation by the government of the Geneva Conven- tion, its position on the use and sale of landmines, or on other weapons that kill indiscriminately;
    - Ratiﬁcation and implementation by the government of CEDAW and/or the CRC;
    - Presence of any reforms, following ratiﬁcation, to ensure that domestic laws and the Constitution respect the in- ternational principles adopted by the state.

#### Legal status of women

* + - Existence of a constitutional equality provision;
    - Whether women are treated equally in court;
    - Whether they can serve in the judiciary, in civil, customary, and religious courts, and whether they do, in practice;
    - Women’s treatment under family laws, including provi- sions concerning divorce.

#### Political expression

* + - Women’s voting rights and the extent to which they exercise these rights;
    - The percentage of women in political parties, government, parliament, etc.;
    - Women’s contribution to civil society and whether they can express any dissatisfaction within their own politi- cal and social movements.

#### Citizenship

* + - Women’s access to citizenship and whether it is con- trolled by father or husband;
    - Whether a woman can pass her citizenship on to her children.

#### Work and mobility

* + - Women’s place in the formal labour force (percentage and evolution);
    - Taking into account the invisibility of women’s contribu- tion to labour, their role in agriculture and the informal sector of the economy.

#### Family

* + - Formation, duration and size of families;
    - The age of marriage for women;
    - Possibility of women to divorce their husbands;
    - Status of single women and widows;
    - Whether women have freedom of movement, and how much.

#### Education

* + - Access of girls and women to education;
    - The level to which can they continue their education;
    - Whether the curriculum is the same for girls and boys, and for women and men.

#### Health

* + - Female mortality rate;
    - Main causes of female deaths;
    - Fertility rate;
    - Whether women have control over their own fertility.

#### Cultural expression

* + - Prevalent images of women and their place in the society.

### **Military and Political Context**

In order to fully understand the conﬂict, you should seek to identify all the belligerents in the conﬂict and other actors, outside or within the region at war. This type of monitoring is essential to determine the nature of the con- ﬂict, i.e. whether it is international or non-international. The more detailed and complete your knowledge of the structure and composition of the armed forces, the more qualiﬁed and empowered you will be to establish responsi- bility for allegations of violations.

#### Gather information on the legal and constitutional context

* + - Legislation that may have been introduced immediately before or during the conﬂict;
    - Declared states of emergency and their implication on individuals’ rights;
    - Laws regulating investigations, such as provisions for immunity from prosecution;
    - Role of military courts;
    - Any provisions for amnesty laws and their past use;
    - Whether certain armed groups have their own systems of justice.

#### Gather information on the organization of the armed forces and monitor changes

* + - Identify all participants in the conﬂict, such as govern- mental armed forces, armed groups, paramilitary forces

and civilian defence forces;

* + - Monitor alliances between the armed factions;
    - Identify the various troops belonging to each of the parties to the conﬂict;
    - Number of soldiers and names of troops;
    - Main commander and chains of command — especially establish who is responsible for holding the military accountable;
    - Procure codes of conduct and rules of engagement.

#### Gather information on methods of operation and means of identiﬁcation

* + - Identify the type of weapons usually used by speciﬁc units;
    - Discover whether they rely on anti-personnel mines;
    - Identify the different uniforms and uniform colours of each troop;
    - Identify the ranking system;
    - List the various types of transportation used by each troop or belligerent;
    - List any other visible signs of identiﬁcation (i.e. some troops may be dominated by one linguistic group or they may use speciﬁc expressions);
    - Discover whether there any preferred strategies or ways of engaging;
    - Monitor the reactions of the military and/or political leadership to allegations of abuses.

#### Gather information on the international dimension of the conﬂict

Armed conﬂicts involve many actors besides the armies en- gaged in combat. All conﬂicts, even those described as non-

international, have, nevertheless, regional and international dimensions characterized by the covert or more open sup- port and assistance of third parties, military and economic transfers, and the involvement of the United Nations.

Third parties, in general other governments, may provide parties to the conﬂict with political and diplomatic backing in international fora, military or economic assistance, ﬁnan- cial support, safe haven for refugees or forces, etc.

Mass human rights abuses are being carried out in many armed conflicts around the world by governments and armed groups that are given virtually unrestricted access to small arms, light weapons and associated military equip- ment and training. In many countries there is virtually no effective public monitoring of the arms and security trade, and there is almost no monitoring or accountability of the end use of such arms in terms of international human rights and humanitarian law criteria.

In many instances of armed conﬂict, credible evidence reveals that military forces acquire arms ﬁnanced through trade in raw materials, such as diamonds, 51 copper and oil. Multinational corporations, with economic interests in the regions at war, have been said to play a role by directly supporting one or the other parties to the conﬂict in order to protect their operations.

1. In recent years, the international community has begun to address this issue. The UN Security Council Resolution 1173 (1998) speciﬁcally sought a ban on diamonds from mines controlled by UNITA in Angola. UN Security Council Resolution 1306 (2000), passed on July 5, 2000, imposes an embargo on the export of all rough diamonds from Sierra Leone for 18 months, until the government of Sierra Leone can establish a proper certiﬁcation system for diamonds and regain full access to the diamond producing areas currently under the control of rebel forces. The resolution also asks the UN Secretary General to create a ﬁve-member panel to study links between the diamond trade and arms trafﬁcking.

Some of the key issues guiding your monitoring of the international dynamics of armed conﬂict may include the following:

* Identiﬁcation of international or regional backers, and the nature of their support (political, military, eco- nomic, etc.);
* The presence and functions of foreign military advisers;
* Type of military assistance (i.e. military training or arms transfers) provided to the parties to the conﬂict before war erupted, and during;
* Identiﬁcation of the national and/or international eco- nomic actors in the region, such as mining companies, or diamond traders, and the international ramiﬁcations of the trade;
* Developments occurring within the United Nations or re- gional organizations (such as the Organization of Ameri- can States or the Organization of African Unity), includ- ing resolutions, personal involvement of the UN Secre- tary General, peace negotiations;
* Any restrictions to arms transfers, such as a UN Security Council arms embargo, and its enforcement;
* Bans on certain types of trade, such as the UN Security Council ban on diamonds from mines controlled by the Na- tional Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA).

### The Role of Women in the Armed Forces

In general, women are less likely than men to be combat- ants, and even when they are, they are less likely to engage in actual combat than their male counterparts. Research tends to show that women’s participation in war efforts is far more traditional (nursing, cooking, etc.) than what is portrayed by many armed movements and the media. According to the Panos project, which interviewed some 200 women in war situations, the women’s roles usually consisted of providing support and care for male combat- ants and victims, although they occasionally also worked as couriers and in intelligence (Panos Institute, 1995).

Some of the questions guiding your monitoring of the role of women in the armed forces may include the following:

* Are there any women among the armed forces, includ- ing the armed political groups?
* What are their main functions?
* Are there any ‘women ﬁghters’ on the front line? How many?
* What is the role of women behind the front line?
* Has the role of the women in the governmental armed forces and those of armed political groups evolved? How? Why?

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| ***Possible sources*: local and international media, local con- tacts in the government, the armed forces, civil society, journalists, UN Internet sites, military reference materials and journals, public reports from foreign countries, mili- tary experts, etc.** |

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| ***Possible sources*: local and international media, jour- nalists, survivors of attacks and abuses, refugees, lo- cal women’s NGOs, medical personnel, ex-combatants, etc.** |

### The Discourse of War and Gender

Armed conﬂicts are also waged through the media, which are usually controlled by parties to the conﬂict. Monitor- ing of the media can often give you an overview of nation- alist or ethno-nationalist ideologies, and their evolution. Articles and speeches may target speciﬁc individuals or communities, and incite or justify violence against them. They also provide an avenue to analyze the treatment, persecution and role of women during the conﬂicts.

Some of the speciﬁc issues guiding your review and analysis of speeches, declarations, written statements, etc., made by war or governmental leaders, journalists, and opinion- makers include the following:

* The ‘construction’ of the role of women in the struggle, and/or justiﬁcation of persecution against the women belonging to the other camps, such as whether women (on the leaders’ side) are primarily seen as child-bear- ers, ﬁghters, etc.; whether women from the other camp are regarded as whores, etc.; what types (if any) of stereotypes or images regarding women inform this discourse;
* How the media and speeches ‘construct’ the role of men and their use of stereotypical masculine images;
* How women themselves (appear to) participate in con- structing these images and/or respond to them. (i.e. whether there are any women, NGOs, or other organiza- tions questioning nationalist frameworks, or if there are any women, NGOs, etc., endorsing or contributing to this framework and the role of women).

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| ***Possible sources*: local and international media, in- cluding television and radio broadcasts, print media, journalists, ofﬁcial reports and speeches, women’s activists and NGOs.** |

### **The Impact of War**

Armed conﬂicts have an impact on *all* aspects of life in the regions at war. The impact may be best measured in terms of peoples’ enjoyment of their political, civil economic, social or cultural rights. Civilians fall victim to deliberate or indiscriminate attacks, abductions, disappearances, torture, etc. In many war situations, whole populations are displaced and families separated. Governments or armed forces may impose a state of emergency and curtail civil, political or labour rights. Economic infrastructure (such as roads, bridges or factories) may be destroyed and social services unable to perform their duties. Conﬂict often destroys or damages the manner in which a family earns money or feeds itself. Factories may no longer be in operation, farming may no longer be viable, salaries may not be paid, and the transport and marketing system may be destroyed.52

#### Right to life and physical integrity

* + - Monitor the abuses and casualties reported in the media or through other sources (see next section).

#### Political rights

* + - Has a state of emergency been declared?
    - Have speciﬁc rights and liberties been curtailed?

1. OXFAM UK/I-ACORD, *Development in conﬂict: the gender dimension*, London, OXFAM, 1993, p.23.

#### Displaced populations

* + - Monitor the reports and Internet sites of the UNHCR and various humanitarian NGOs to track the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees and gather data on the percentage or number of women and children and unaccompanied minors.
    - Monitor the ability of displaced persons to access basic services and amenities.
    - Monitor the impact of conﬂict-related displacement on citizenship rights.

#### 5.4. Health and other social services

Some of the issues you may wish to research include the following:

* Data on mortality rate, mortality during pregnancy, during labour, child mortality;
* Whether hospitals and other social services have been destroyed or left inoperative;
* Access to medicine and medical services;
* Access to education.

#### 5.5. Economic infrastructure

Monitoring the local media may allow you to determine the extent of the destruction of economic infrastructure such as factories, roads and bridges.

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| ***Possible sources*: local and international media, includ- ing television and radio broadcasts and print media, journalists, ofﬁcial reports and speeches, UN agencies and international and national humanitarian actors.** |

### **The Impact of War on Women**

As we state throughout this manual, armed conﬂicts have different impacts on men and women. Women are more likely to experience war as civilians and too often as dis- placed persons outside their homes and communities. In fact, the UNHCR estimates that 70 to 80% of the world refugee and internally displaced population is composed of women and children.

Although women are less likely than men to be combatants, women are more likely to form the greatest proportion of the adult civilian population killed in war and targeted for abuse. In many situations investigated by human rights activists, women ﬁnd themselves the victims of attacks on villages because of their domestic functions: *“the majority of women are targeted for abuse simply because they are easily located in their homes by army and paramilitary patrols.”*53

In the Maela camp for persons displaced by large-scale killings in the Rift Valley [Kenya], women were frequently raped by security personnel when they left the camp in search of food or to work as casual labourers. One woman told Amnesty International (AI),*“Even though we knew this was likely to happen, we continued to do this work because our children were hungry and we had no choice.”*

The economic impact of an armed conﬂict is also often gender-speciﬁc. Women’s burdens in times of war are espe- cially heavy because their usual functions within house- holds (i.e. feeding the family, fetching water and wood, feeding livestock, etc.) are more difﬁcult to carry out,

1. AI, *Women in Colombia*, 1995, (AMR/23/41/95).

often because of the absence of male relatives. Women are especially vulnerable to the destruction of health services resulting from wars: pregnancy and childbirth are left unat- tended, care for their children is no longer available. As the majority of the civilian population, women, children and older persons are particularly vulnerable in cases of food blockades as well as attacks on or destruction of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, and drinking water installations. *“Although women are generally not directly involved in the hostilities, they are the most affected by the trauma of displacement. The 1994 report of the Colombian Episcopal Conference showed that 58% of the displaced are women. The majority are heads of families and have ﬂed rural zones affected by the armed conﬂict.”* 54

If a woman has become the sole person responsible for the well-being of the family, the absence of proper infrastruc- ture will impose additional stress on her (failure to feed the children) and additional work (looking for alternative resources). Faced with a chronic absence of resources and in periods of extreme necessity, women may engage in activities that may not be socially acceptable (such as prostitution or dealing in the black market).

All these domestic functions are also carried in the midst of great anguish, continuous fear and stress, and trauma. Women may have been the victims of abuses themselves or have witnessed abuses, often committed against family members. Their male relatives may be ﬁghting or may have ‘disappeared’.

The following sections discuss what you should focus on in your monitoring activities.

1. AI, *Colombia’s internally displaced: dispossessed and exiled in their own land*, October 1997 (AMR 23/48/97), p.19.

#### Right to life and physical integrity

* + - Incidents of killings, torture including rape, other forms of sexual violence, abduction, etc. (See next section);
    - Independently of casualties directly resulting from armed clashes, you may be able to ﬁnd information on the impact of the conﬂict on the incidence of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women in the family or the community.

#### Legal status

* + - Has the conﬂict had an impact on the legal status of women?

#### 6.3. Family life

Seek data and information on the following:

* Changes in the number of single-headed households and of widows;
* Changes in the age of marriage, instances of polygamy, divorce rate.

#### Women’s workload

Monitor whether the conﬂict has had an impact on any or all of the following:

* + - Women’s domestic tasks, such as fetching water or wood;
    - Access to food;
    - Women’s farming activities;
    - Women’s access to land;
    - Women’s access to income-generating activities, such as trading, market activities, marketing of common re- sources (wood), pottery-making;

Questions you should ask include the following:

* + - Has limited access to land caused a greater impact on women? Why?
    - Has limited access to food especially affected women and/or children?
    - Has loss of income resulting from the war especially affected women? Which women?
    - Are there any reports that women have resorted to ac- tivities such as prostitution, black marketeering, mak- ing alcohol?

#### Health

Monitor public health indicators such as the following:

* + - Changes in the rates of tuberculosis and other transmis- sible diseases;
    - Changes in child mortality rates;
    - Changes in mortality rates of women in childbirth;
    - Malnutrition rates;
    - Fertility rates;
    - Prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), in- cluding HIV.

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| ***Possible sources*: local and international media, in- cluding television and radio broadcasts, and print media, jour-nalists, ofﬁcial reports and speeches, UN agencies, international and national humanitarian actors, women’s NGOs and women activists, survivors and refugees.** |