



Dealing with Threats, Risks & Safety

SESSION FOUR:

DEVELOPING A PROTECTION AND

SECURITY PLAN

Overview: The creation of protection and security plans for either individuals or organizations.

Purpose: For a protection plan to be truly a tool that protects and keeps people safe as much as possible, it needs to reflect certain characteristics and recognize that activists are embedded in a web of relationships from family and community to organizations and the wider society. This activity takes a group through a process to develop a plan that is:

- Always defined and developed by the activist or the activist and her organization, ensuring buy-in and commitment, empowerment, and effectiveness of strategies.
- Realistic and realizable, garnering sufficient resources and support of all kinds including families, communities, organizations, alliances, international networks, etc.
- Constantly updated and adjusted to meet ever changing contexts and power dynamics.
- Responsive to the needs and concerns of the activist, her loved ones, and her organization and movement, ensuring their protection and support.
- Clear about who is responsible for implementation, including the possible formation of a support and action committee that is approved by the activist and made up of family, friends, colleagues and others.





Materials Needed:

The 2 Handouts provided:

- A worksheet on Protection Plans
- **PERSONAL PROTECTION AND SECURITY PLAN** from the Frontline Workbook

Time: 3 – 4 hours

Credit: Adapted by Marusia López Cruz and Valerie Miller, drawing on the Protection International manual "New Manual for Defenders of Human Rights" and our work with women activists in JASS Mesoamerica (including with IM-defenders) and JASS Southern Africa

Facilitation Note: *Protection and security plans can be geared toward individuals and organizations. We will include three approaches– two for individuals and one for organizations. They vary in complexity. The first one is the most complex and comes from the work of Consorcio Oaxaca and is focused on an individual plan. It contains step by step instructions and framework; the other two can be presented as examples of other formats. The second, also focuses on the personal, and the third is a plan for an organization. Both come from the Frontline Workbook.*

PERSONAL PROTECTION AND SECURITY PLAN

Framework adapted from Consorcio Oaxaca

In plenary:

- Introduce session purpose and explain process
- Brainstorm – what's important when thinking about a protection plan? Record key ideas.
- Summarize and complement group's contributions with the characteristics above and any other points you think significant, ask for comments, and whether anything else should be included.
- Present worksheet framework (**Personal Protection and Security Plan**) and discuss, clarify any questions and solicit and suggestions, improvements

Facilitation Note: *Depending on input, you may want to make some adjustments in the worksheet framework below.*

Individually:

- Select one or two of the most imminent and serious threats you face and complete the following worksheet that spells out specific measures or actions to be taken in response to a threat (see **WORKSHEET: Personal Protection and Security Plan**).



In Pairs:

- Have people share some of the highlights of their plan around ONE threat and ask for feedback – for example, what seems strong and well thought-through, what might need strengthening, what might be missing? What questions does the plan raise? Other comments?

In plenary:

Have everyone share one or two things they learned from developing the plan and what they need to help them go forward with their plan. **It is very important that protection is seen as an on-going process and that next steps are identified and discussed.**

Wrap Up: Summarize, emphasizing key points, clarifying any doubts or questions, and add any information you feel relevant

- Option: Depending on the circumstances, offer support from key resource people to review the details of the plans and provide more experienced feedback
- Option: To broaden people's views about alternative plans, the following examples provide some simpler formats for both personal and organizational plans, both adapted from the Frontline Workbook.
- As always with this work on risks and threats, it is good to close the session with something affirming, calming and supportive – breath work, song, movement to release tension, a communal meal, solidarity offering, etc.



Worksheet: Personal Protection and Security Plan

Name specific threat:

Spheres of life and action	Type of Protection and Defense Measures: Some examples	Specific Measures and strategies	Existing resources, abilities, power	By when and by whom - time and person responsible for implementation
Personal/ intimate	Personal empowerment, well-being and self-care: > sense of self-worth > emotional strength > economic autonomy > critical awareness/ thinking/ power analysis > physical health, etc.			
	Awareness of risks and need for protection			
	Other . . .			
Family and other close	Support network of friends and			



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relations	family			
	Legal or other type of actions to protect against domestic violence			
	Protection of children and other members of family			
	Shared domestic chores and child care			
	Other. . .			
Surroundings	Security measures in home			
	Security measures in office			
	Safe means of travel (personal and family)			
	Actions to defend against sexual harassment on street and public transport			
	Other. . .			
Organization or movement	Protection and security policies and plans			



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	Women-only spaces			
	Actions within organizations against sexist violence and discrimination			
	Processes to deal with organizational differences and conflict creatively and constructively			
	Measures that make the organization's commitment to gender equality visible			
	Processes for equality in decision making between sexes			
	Connections with international organizations and solidarity networks			
	Commitment to gender equality and women's rights in the organizations			



	agenda, including gender training			
	Affirmative measures to ensure women's participation			
	Support for child care			
	Other.....			
Communication	Access to and use of secure IT and communication			
	Protection of sensitive information			
	Access to media sources and outlets			
	Other.....			
Government/ State institutions	Knowledge and analysis of political context and players, including: >policies of repression, criminalization of activism, use of violence against women and allies >specific officials in positions of power			



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	>connection with other powerful elites e.g. local corporations, multinationals etc.			
	Actions and demonstrations in defense and protection of women and their allies			
	Actions to ensure effective and equal access to the justice system			
	Connections with other governments and international governmental institutions supportive of women's rights			
	Other. . .			
Corporate and other powerful interests	Knowledge and analysis of their organizational structure, operations, strategies and connections with government and other elites			



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	Actions and demonstrations in defense and protection of women and community			
	Other...			



Handout One

PERSONAL PROTECTION AND SECURITY PLAN:

from Frontline Workbook

Specific Risk: Arrest in the context of police search of home and confiscation of papers/phone/ laptop

Probability of this happening: medium to high – other Human Rights Defenders have been targeted in this way recently.

Impact if it happens: medium to high for myself, my family and my organization

Threat assessment: Police usually raid homes in the early hours of the morning

Vulnerabilities:

- There is no due legal process - there will not be a search warrant or right to have a lawyer present.
- We deal with sensitive information in my organization.
- My young children live at home.

Strengths/Capacities/support:

- Ability to plan (thinking through how you can best respond in advance reduces the losses you could incur)
- National and international network of colleagues and prominent bilateral donors

Action:

1. Discuss the risk with my spouse and tell him who to call if the police arrive (possibly getting colleagues / friends to witness the search if their presence will not put them at risk of arrest too), and who to call afterwards (e.g. human rights organizations).
2. Arrange for the children to sleep at their Aunt's at times of heightened risk.
3. Investigate possibility of CCTV in home to record event
4. Be aware of my rights in detention so I can request them authoritatively (even though they probably won't be granted)
5. Have a lawyer briefed in case I am allowed access to a lawyer
6. Do not store sensitive work information at home
7. Delete sensitive information from computer and phone
8. Ensure all my personal affairs (taxes etc.) are in order so that they cannot become a pretext for a political prosecution)
9. Have organization update urgent action list of national and international contacts and be ready to activate.
10. Have organization prepare communication and outreach strategy for potential allies and key media sources.



Handout Two

ORGANIZATIONAL PROTECTION AND SECURITY PLAN:

From Frontline Workbook

Organizational Plan: 'Traffic Light' Security Settings

Some activists use a simple planning format based on traffic lights.

- If the situation is 'Green', then all is proceeding as normal and no special security precautions need be taken.
- If the situation is 'Yellow' then there is increased risk and a number of precautions need to be taken.
- If the situation is 'Red' then this is the highest risk situation and the highest security measures need to be taken.

Each organization would need to create its own Traffic Light Security Settings based on their own context, threats, vulnerabilities, strengths, capacities and support resources. But here is a short example.

Example: 'Traffic Light' Security Settings

Alert Level	Staff and families	Work projects	Office
Green	+ No restriction	+ No restriction	+ Normal security
Yellow	+ Staff most at risk (decided in advance) work at home + No staff to work alone in office or outside designated office hours + Reminder of who is to call in emergencies, and who is to be activated in response + Alert trusted neighbors/local community + Provide families with security options	+ Sensitive projects put on hold (decided in advance which ones are sensitive) + Lawyer and solidarity networks alerted to potential dangers + other work continues	+ Guard hired + No visitors allowed + Check no sensitive information available in office or homes + Alert trusted neighbors/local community + Alert police if appropriate
Red	+ Relocate staff most at risk and families if needed (who and where decided in advance) + Other staff do not come to work	+ All work halted temporarily + Advise solidarity networks and donors	+ Office locked + Additional guard hired



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The advantage of the Traffic Light Security Settings is that they are simple. They are easy to communicate to a large number of people and to communicate when the security setting changes. However, they are not a replacement for a fully thought through Organizational Protection and Security Plan and the development of awareness of security issues throughout the organization.