



If you are a **human rights defender** or part of an organization or movement that defends human rights, the land, the community or the environment, this information can help **you protect yourself and your work.**

### WHO ARE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS?

Human rights defenders are people, groups, organizations or institutions that promote or defend one or more universally recognized human rights or freedoms **without the use of violence.**

### WHAT DOES SAFETY MEAN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS?

It means an environment where individuals, groups, organizations or movements that defend human rights can feel safe and carry out their work without coming to any harm.

### WHAT IS PROTECTION?

The state has the primary responsibility for protecting human rights defenders. However, there are measures that can be taken individually or collectively to reduce risk. **Self-protection is what we do to avoid harm. We can all help towards protecting our lands, families, communities and ourselves.**

### WHAT IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

**This toolkit is an introduction on how to defend human rights safely.** It sets out 10 steps with practical exercises to help you stay safe while you are advocating for your cause and protecting your wellbeing.



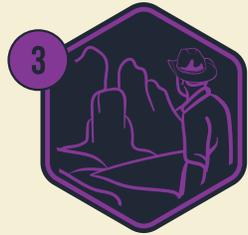
# CONTENTS



**"DEFINING SECURITY AND RISK"** identifies useful concepts to improve your security and reduce risk.



**"CONTEXT ANALYSIS"** is a tool that helps you identify and better understand the context in which you find yourself.



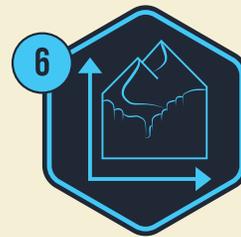
**"ACTOR MAPPING"** is an exercise that allows you to map the organizations and people linked to your activities.



**"SECURITY INCIDENTS"** provides a tool for recording and analysing factors that may affect your safety so that you can address them in an appropriate and timely way.



**"VULNERABILITIES AND CAPACITIES"** helps you analyse your weak points and sets out some recommendations improving your security.



**"ASSESSING RISK"** suggests ways to recognize what kind of risks you should prioritize.



**"SECURITY STRATEGIES"** discusses useful approaches to responding to dangerous situations.



**"PROTECTION MEASURES"** suggests concrete ways to prevent and reduce risk.



**"COMMUNITY CARE"** focuses on the idea of comprehensive safety and suggests ways we can look after each other and ensure the wellbeing of our communities.



**"SAFETY TIPS"** contains specific suggestions on what to do if you take part in a protest or if you are arrested.



# DEFINING SECURITY AND RISK

## WHAT IS SAFETY?

Safety is a feeling and a situation. As a feeling, it means experiencing a sense of calm, joy and confidence in your environment and in your ability deal with the situations that arise. As a situation, it means living in conditions that ensure your wellbeing. This includes everything you consider part of who you are, like your body, family, community, territory, nature, beliefs, sexual preferences, feelings, traditions and identities. Ensuring your safety requires individual and collective efforts. Different people in different situations do this in diverse ways.



## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY RISK?

Risk is the opposite of safety: it is danger. Risk is the possibility of harm to the causes you believe in and to the groups or organizations you belong to and/or to their individual members. As human rights defenders, risk often comes from those who want to harm us and our communities. On the other hand, it may be our own attitudes or behaviours that put us at risk. Risk can also be the result of natural disasters or socio-economic or political factors. All of us have weaknesses (vulnerabilities) that put us at risk, but we can always do something to reduce or even avoid harm using our capacities.

### • WHAT ARE THREATS?

Something that is said or done that indicates someone can and wants to harm us.

### • WHAT ARE VULNERABILITIES?

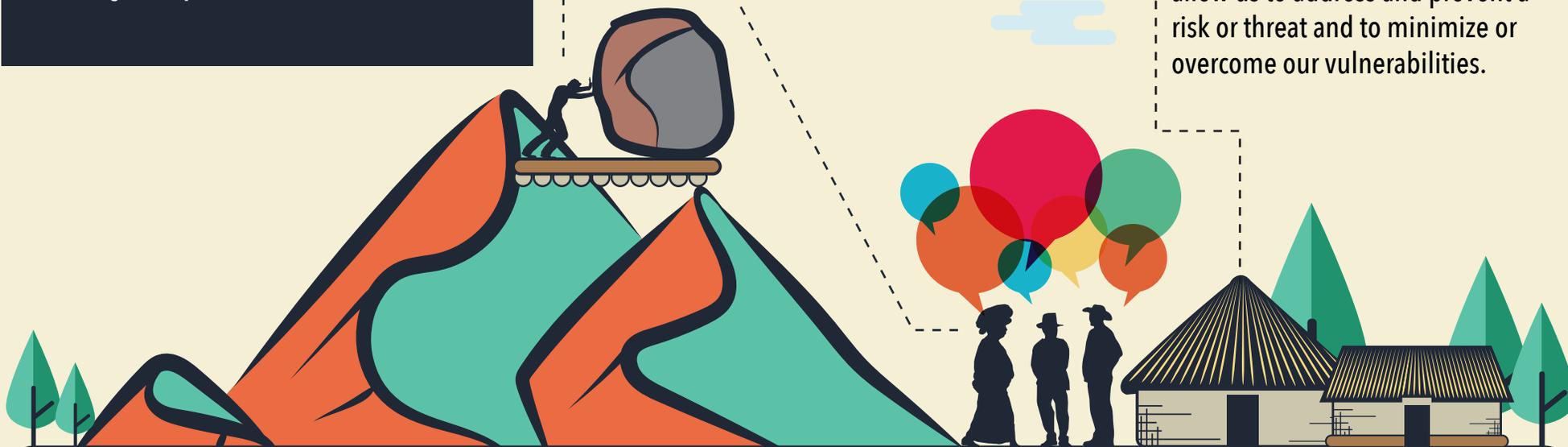
The behaviours or weaknesses that expose a person or an organization to danger and that we can take action to minimize.

### • WHAT ARE CAPACITIES?

The behaviours and strengths that allow us to address and prevent a risk or threat and to minimize or overcome our vulnerabilities.

## HOW CAN YOU IDENTIFY RISK?

There are several exercises in this toolkit that you can use to identify the risks and dangers you face, as well as what capacities and vulnerabilities you have for addressing them.





**Postpone** the risk —  
by stopping an activity  
or action that presents  
a significant risk and  
waiting for a better time  
to start again.

**Accept** the risk —  
because you consider it  
is manageable or  
minimal and you can  
live with it.

**Reduce** the risk —  
with specific measures  
that take into account  
your capacities and  
vulnerabilities.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

THERE ARE SEVERAL STRATEGIES YOU  
CAN ADOPT WHEN FACED WITH RISK:



**Escape** the risk —  
when you have no other  
option because your  
life is in great danger.



**Share** the impact —  
by undertaking joint  
action with other  
defenders,  
organizations or  
movements.



**Ignoring** risk is not recommended as it usually makes your situation worse and makes you more vulnerable. You should always analyse the risk and find a way to protect yourself.

● **WHAT DANGERS CAN YOU SPOT IN THIS IMAGE?**

● **WHAT MEASURES COULD YOU TAKE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE RISK PRESENTS ITSELF TO AVOID THE DANGER?**



● **WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS WHEN YOU THINK YOU ARE SAFE?**

● **WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS WHEN YOU THINK YOU ARE IN DANGER?**

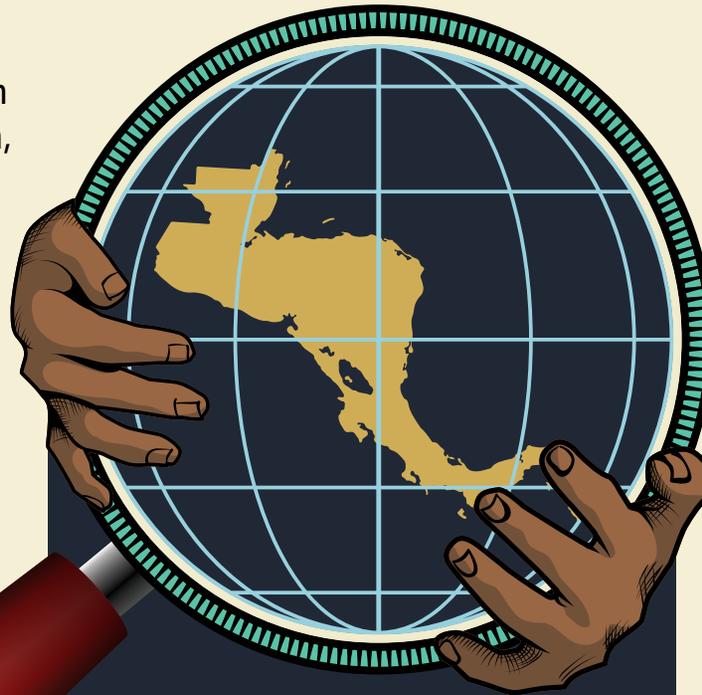
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# CONTEXT ANALYSIS

**ECONOMIC:** an analysis of resources in the region and the people linked to them. This can include natural resources, money, information, or anything else that can be used by someone to serve their interests.

**POLITICAL:** understanding the way in which decisions are made in your community, country, organization, family, and so on. It is related to the exercise of power and decision making about resources, people and living conditions.



Understanding the environment in which you are working helps you make strategic decisions about your security. An analysis of the **economic, political, legal, environmental, cultural, social and technological** context means you have more information about how to protect and defend yourself, as well as the cause that you are defending.

**LEGAL:** this area of analysis includes considering the agreements and laws in force that govern coexistence, exchange and decision making.

**ENVIRONMENTAL:** it is important to look at the environment that surrounds you and your community, which presents natural limits and shapes a community's way of life.

**CULTURAL:** this category refers to the customs and practices in your community and how they relate to your beliefs about and role in the world.

**SOCIAL:** an analysis of all the groups you are involved with in the different areas of your life and in your communities. It should take into account the development of roles and relationships among members of various groups, organizations and communities.

**TECHNOLOGICAL:** this includes looking at the technological resources that enable you to perform complex tasks, such as communicating, more easily, including radios, transmitters, mobile phones, tools or vehicles.

# SOME QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK IN A CONTEXT ANALYSIS

1. Who makes decisions in your community and how?

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2. Who are the main authorities in your community?

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3. What are the visible forms of power in your community? Institutions, police, military...

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4. What are the invisible forms of power in your community? What are the main beliefs and ideologies?

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5. What are the main economic interests in your community?

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6. What national and international laws affect your work as a human rights defender?

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7. What are the principle means of communication in your community? Do you have access to contacts in the national and/or international media?

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8. What technologies are relevant in your community? Is there access to the internet, mobile phones, community radio or other relevant technology?

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9. Where do you source information relevant to your work as a human rights defender? Is it reliable?

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10. What are the cultural traditions in your community? What languages are spoken in your community?

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# ACTOR MAPPING

Actor mapping allows you to clearly identify your allies, as well as those who oppose your work as a human rights defender. These actors can be a support or a threat to you, or they may not have a clear stance towards your activities. They can be local, national or international.





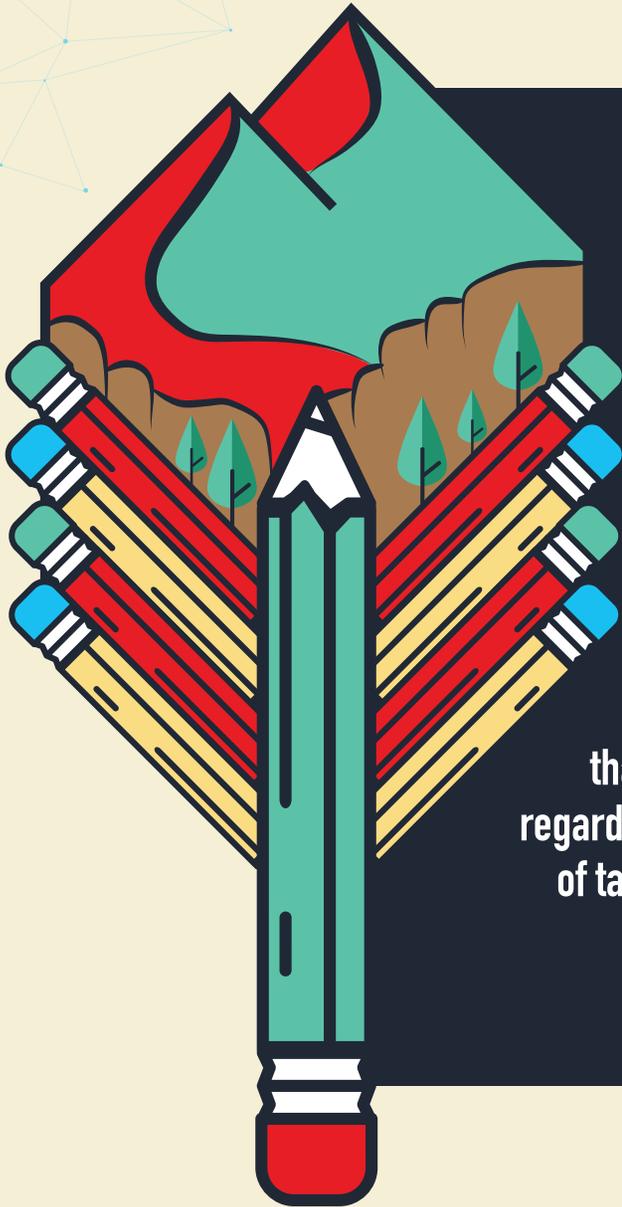


# SECURITY INCIDENTS

Security incidents are **anything that can cause physical, moral, economic, psychological or any other harm to your cause or to the people and organizations you work with.**

It's important to monitor these incidents because over time they can provide information about your safety.

**One option is to keep a log of incidents.** This works best if one person is responsible for keeping the log so that they can identify patterns and issue warnings regarding the danger. That person should also be in charge of taking care of the log and keeping it in a safe place.



**DATE (DAY, MONTH AND YEAR) AND TIME:**

Include general information about when it happened and give as much detail as possible.

**WHERE?** Give the place where it happened in as much detail as possible.

**WHO CARRIED OUT THE ATTACK?** Give all the information you have about the people who carried out the attack.

**INCIDENT:** What happened? Describe the incident in as much detail as possible.

**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE\*:** Was the attack directly related to the gender of the person targeted?

**WHY DID IT HAPPEN?** Describe the probable causes of the incident.

**TARGETED OR RANDOM?** Describe whether it was a planned, targeted and/or provoked attack or whether it was just a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

**SOURCE:** Who could have planned this incident? Who stands to gain from it?

**NAME OF THE PERSON REPORTING THE INCIDENT:**

Write the name of the person reporting the incident.

**NAME OF THE PERSON TARGETED:**

Write the name of the person who was targeted.

\* Gender-based violence includes physical or psychological violence against any person or group because of their sex or gender

**DATE (DAY, MONTH AND YEAR) AND TIME:**

23/03/2018. 07:15am

**WHERE?** City "Example", near the No. 8 bus terminal between "Example 1" and "Example 2" streets.

**ATTACKER:** Unidentified white man with brown hair approx. 1.70m tall

**INCIDENT:** Armed robbery on the bus, they only took my mobile phone, then they got off the bus and into a car with the number plate 98763IK.

**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:** Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

**WHY DID IT HAPPEN?** It seems that I was targeted because there was important information on the phone and it was the only thing this person stole from those on the bus.

**TARGETED OR RANDOM?** It seemed targeted.

**SOURCE:** We do not know who organized it, but it didn't seem like an ordinary crime because the phone contained recordings related to illegal logging in the forest near Don Fulano.



**NAME OF PERSON MAKING THE REPORT:** Raúl

**NAME OF VICTIM:** Raúl



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# VULNERABILITIES AND CAPACITIES

Here you'll find definitions of vulnerabilities and capacities related to the security of human rights defenders

**A CAPACITY** is any practice, skill or knowledge you have to avoid a risk or to overcome a vulnerability. Different kinds of capacities are set out in the following section.

**A VULNERABILITY** is a behaviour or characteristic of a person, organization or community that puts them at particular risk. Vulnerabilities can relate to physical security, communication, resources, etc. Different kinds of vulnerabilities are included on the following slide.

The next exercise invites you to explore vulnerabilities and capacities in more depth from both an **individual** and a **group** perspective.

## EXERCISE

On a page set out in columns, like the one we suggest here, write down your capacities and vulnerabilities as a person and as a group or organization. We suggest using categories to help you focus on some key points. Below are some examples for each one to give you an idea of the kind of things you might include.

CATEGORIES	CAPACITIES		VULNERABILITIES	
	INDIVIDUALS	GROUPS	INDIVIDUALS	GROUPS
<p><b>PHYSICAL SECURITY:</b> This refers to all the buildings and materials you use, spaces where you meet and the routes you use in your daily life. This includes the place where you keep physical documents related to your cause or organization and the escape routes that you can use in an emergency.</p>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<p><b>TECHNOLOGICAL SECURITY:</b> The technology you have access to, particularly your ability to save, process, send and reproduce information. All the devices you use for this purpose fall under this heading. Information on mobile phones, computers, radios etc. should all be included in your security assessment.</p>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<p><b>RESOURCES:</b> The supply of funds, materials, assets, staff etc that helps you function effectively. Each cause and organization has different resources and an important part of the security strategy is based on knowing what you have, how you look after it and what you need.</p>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<p><b>MEANS OF COMMUNICATION:</b> The means you have to send and receive information . These can be an effective way to strengthen your cause and organization, but they can also undermine them, depending on how you relate to and access the means of communication.</p>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<p><b>WELLBEING:</b> Everything that each person and community sees as part of a full and satisfying life. Each person and community has a different definition of what that is, and so should decide what this means for them and how they can meet their wellbeing needs.</p>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<p><b>SUSTAINABILITY:</b> The ability of a person, organization or community to manage their resources in a conscious and responsible way, without exhausting them or compromising access to these resources in the future.</p>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
<p><b>SOCIAL RELATIONS:</b> No organization or person acts in isolation. The people and organizations that you have a friendly relationship with can be very supportive.</p>	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____

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# RISK ASSESSMENT

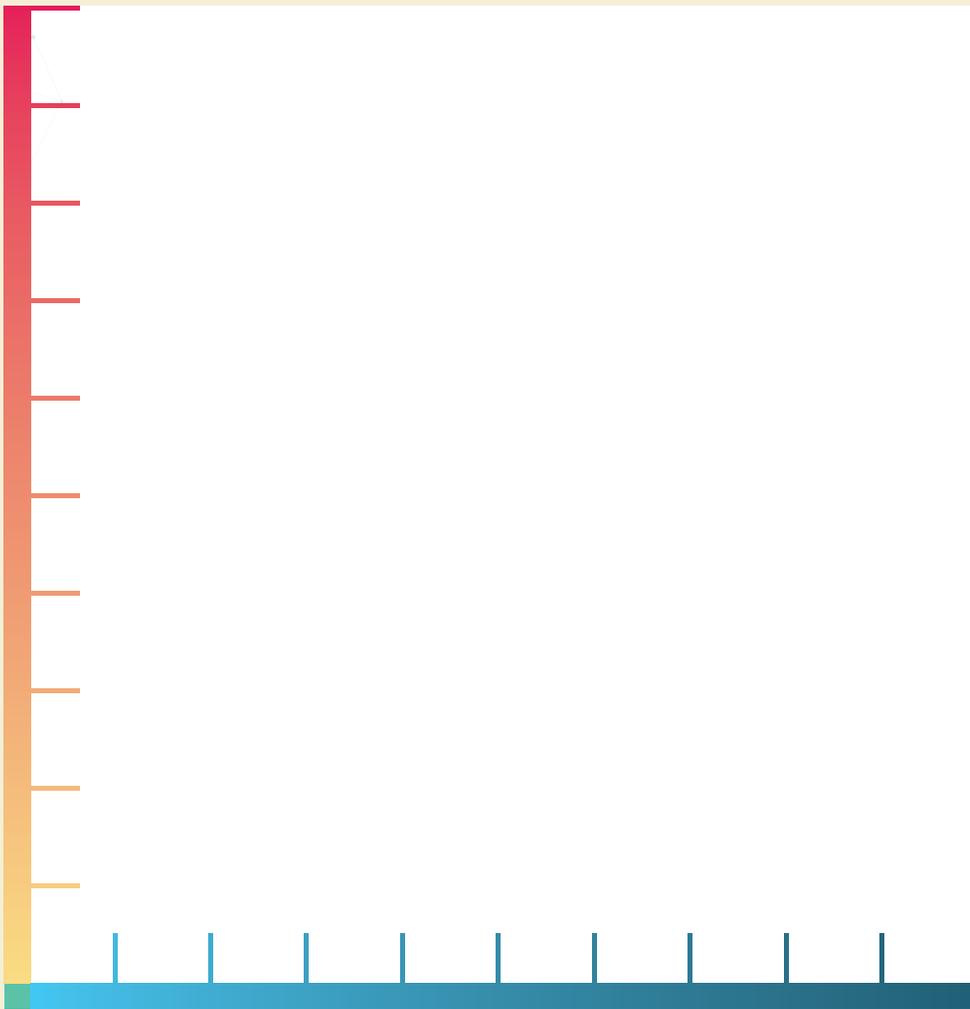


**IMPACT:** Each risk will affect your interests, organization or community to a greater or lesser extent, depending on your vulnerabilities and capacities. Something that is harmless is considered to have **no impact** and something that can harm your organization or community is considered to have a **decisive impact**.

The level of risk helps you identify what situations you need to address, to what extent and when.

**PROBABILITY:** An estimate of how likely it is that a particular event will occur. A **low probability** indicates that something is unlikely to happen; normally your capacities play a fundamental role here. A **high probability** means that something is very likely to happen.

DECISIVE  
IMPACT

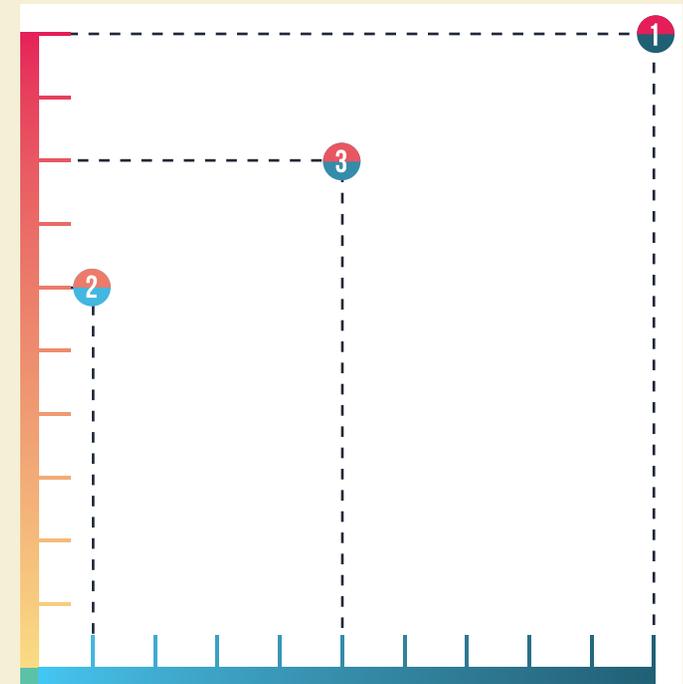


NO IMPACT LOW PROBABILITY

HIGH PROBABILITY

## EXAMPLES

1. Theft of key information
2. Intimidation of members of the organization
3. Defamation of the organization in the media



## EXERCISE

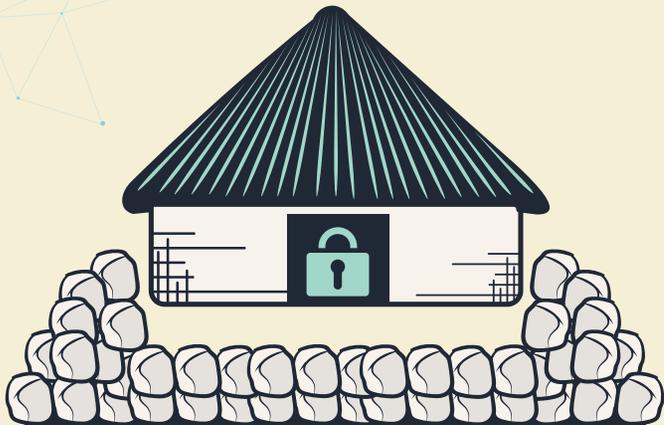
Use this exercise to highlight and prioritize risks. Complete the mapping, as in the example, with the risks you have identified. The highest priority risks are those in the red area; those that are in the lightest area are those that you can leave for later or simply keep an eye on. When prioritizing, it is a good idea to map risks that can happen soon (short-term), those that may happen later on (medium-term) and those that may happen in the more distant future (long-term).

As this is strategic/sensitive information, we recommend that this information be stored in a secure place and not where it can be seen publicly.

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# SECURITY STRATEGIES



When you face a risk, you always have options. Deciding on the right ones at the right time allows you to address the situation and protect what is important while you deal with what is urgent. You can choose one or more of the following options at the same time:

Protection International, *New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders*

Available at:  
<https://www.protectioninternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Protection-Manual-3rd-Edition.pdf>



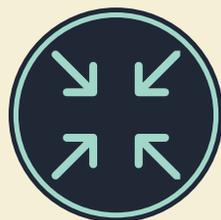
## ACCEPT:

You accept the situation. You recognize that you are at risk, but you think it is manageable and that you can live with it.



## SHARE:

You communicate and build alliances with people or organizations that you trust and whose perspectives, resources and options can support your cause and so reduce the impact of the risk.



## REDUCE:

You face the situation and work out how to avoid, address or reduce the risk as much as possible.



## POSTPONE:

You stop doing whatever is causing problems and wait for a better time to start again.



## ESCAPE:

When you have no other way out because your life is in very real danger.



## IGNORE:

You act as though nothing has happened and continue doing things in the same way, regardless of the consequences. This is not advisable as it usually leads to increased risk and to threats materializing.

## EXERCISE: EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**IMPORTANT:** These are not recommendations and are not designed to be taken seriously in the case presented. They are just possible quick answers to help you understand the exercise, but a deeper analysis must be carried out in all cases:

- In this case, what would "escaping the risk" involve?

Getting away from the volcano.

- In this case, what would "accepting the risk" involve?

Analysing the situation and deciding that it is best to stay at home.

- In this case, what would "reducing the risk" mean?

Once the threat of the volcano is accepted, deal with the situation, possibly by digging a ditch around the house to avoid possible damage to the structure and addressing the likely food shortages in the next few days or weeks.

- In this case, how can you "share the risk"?

Calling the emergency services and asking them what the most appropriate measures are.

- In this case, what would "postponing the risk" entail?

Leaving the community and coming back to live there later.

- In this case, what would "ignoring the risk" involve?

Staying put and acting as though nothing was happening.

- What are the advantages of each option?

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- What are the disadvantages of each option?

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# PROTECTION MEASURES



**What are protection measures?** We can all help care for our lives, family, land and community; that is what "protection" means. Protection measures are precautions you take or things that you do when facing a risk or threat in order to feel more safe and secure. Below are three examples of situations of risk that you can use to practise what you have learned from this toolkit.

The responses are different for each situation because they take into account the specific risks and what specific actions can be taken to avoid, reduce or share them.

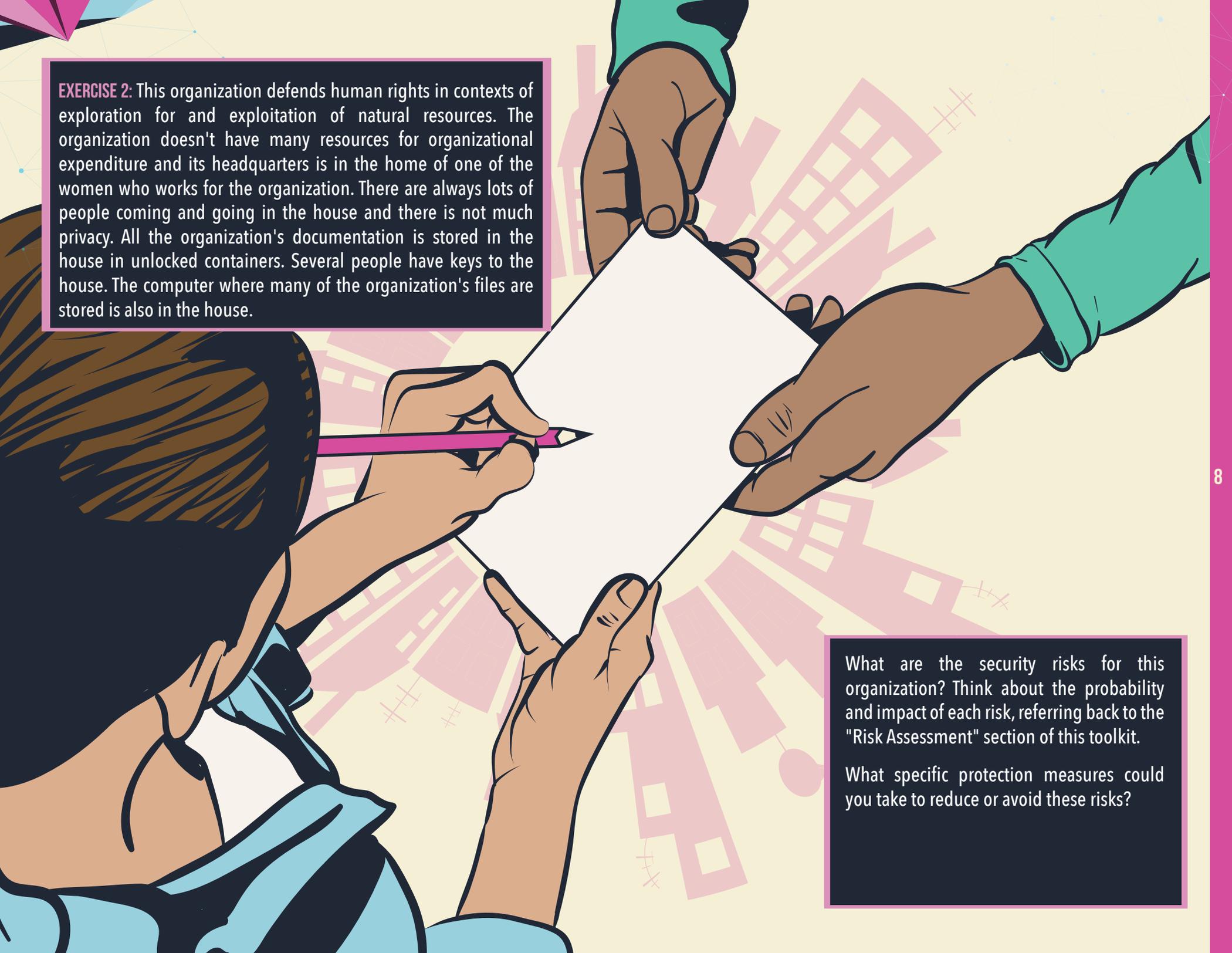


**EXERCISE 1:** There is an organization working to defend the territory of the community. A few years ago, the municipal authorities sold community land to a company. That company is now logging in a nearby forest and has started a project to extract gas from the subsoil with chemicals harmful to the community's water supply. The organization has disputed the government's right to sell these lands. People who work for the company come into town all the time and lots of people in the community have seen them taking pictures of activists, their homes and the headquarters of the organization, which was set up when community members found out about the logging in the forest. Representatives of the organization have also received threats over the phone. In addition to all this, municipal officials have publicly declared that those working in the organization are "criminals".

What are the risks faced by members of this organization? Think about the probability and impact of each risk by referring to the "Risk Assessment" section of this toolkit.

What protection measures can the organization take to reduce or avoid these risks?

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION**



**EXERCISE 2:** This organization defends human rights in contexts of exploration for and exploitation of natural resources. The organization doesn't have many resources for organizational expenditure and its headquarters is in the home of one of the women who works for the organization. There are always lots of people coming and going in the house and there is not much privacy. All the organization's documentation is stored in the house in unlocked containers. Several people have keys to the house. The computer where many of the organization's files are stored is also in the house.

What are the security risks for this organization? Think about the probability and impact of each risk, referring back to the "Risk Assessment" section of this toolkit.

What specific protection measures could you take to reduce or avoid these risks?



**EXERCISE 3:** Several organizations are planning a demonstration in the capital to protest against a case of corruption in the government. A group of seven young defenders who come from a community six hours from the capital want to participate in the demonstration. The police will be present at the demonstration and have used tear gas in the past. The group consists of four men and three women. All are adults, except for one boy who is 16 years old. Only two people have mobile phones with credit on them.

What are the risks of travelling to the capital and taking part in the demonstration? Think about the probability and impact of each risk by referring to the "Risk Assessment" section of this toolkit.

What are some protection measures that the group can take during the trip to reduce or avoid these risks?

What protection measures should the group take during the demonstration?

Are there specific risks for the women in the group?



# COMMUNITY CARE

Our activities as an individual or an organization defending human rights are developed as part of a community. Every community is based on the bonds that exist between its members and requires common skills to survive and remain strong. A comprehensive protection process includes not only measures to guard against risks and threats, but also cultivating ways of taking care of each other and strengthening our communities. Here are some collective ways we can look out for each other as part of a comprehensive community care process.

- **SUPPORT NETWORKS:** Support networks are all those people and organizations that support your cause and your organization and that you can trust. The exercise included in this section will help you identify your support network.

- **SELF CARE:** The work you do can sometimes be exhausting and it can affect you in lots of ways, depending on many different factors including your gender, age, sexual preferences, economic status and so on. It is vital that you take care of your health and wellbeing in order to protect yourself and continue to take action as a defender, whether you're defending territory, the environment, human rights or any other issue.



● **SELF-GOVERNANCE:** This means taking charge of the resources of your organization or community in a sustainable and direct way, without relying on external actors and/or resources. This helps strengthen your community or organization economically and bolster your cause, as well as taking care of the environment and the earth. Self-governance can be a strategy to protect and defend the culture of Indigenous Peoples.

● **COSMOVISION:** Cosmivision (worldview) is a central concept in the experience, culture and organization of Indigenous Peoples and can be a crucial part of their self-protection. It is the way you see life and the world and your relationship with the earth and the universe. Cosmivision shapes a community's understanding of everything, including politics, economics, society and spirituality. Each community cultivates, nurtures and observes its cosmivision or worldview in its own way.

● **IDENTITY:** Protecting your way of life and the traditions of the communities you are part of is important in order to maintain your links with your roots and create strong bonds with your own identity and your community, as well as with other communities that defend what you believe in and what you are working for.



**WHAT OTHER WAYS OF STAYING SAFE DO YOU KNOW ABOUT? WHAT DOES YOUR COMMUNITY SAY ABOUT HOW TO STAY SAFE?**



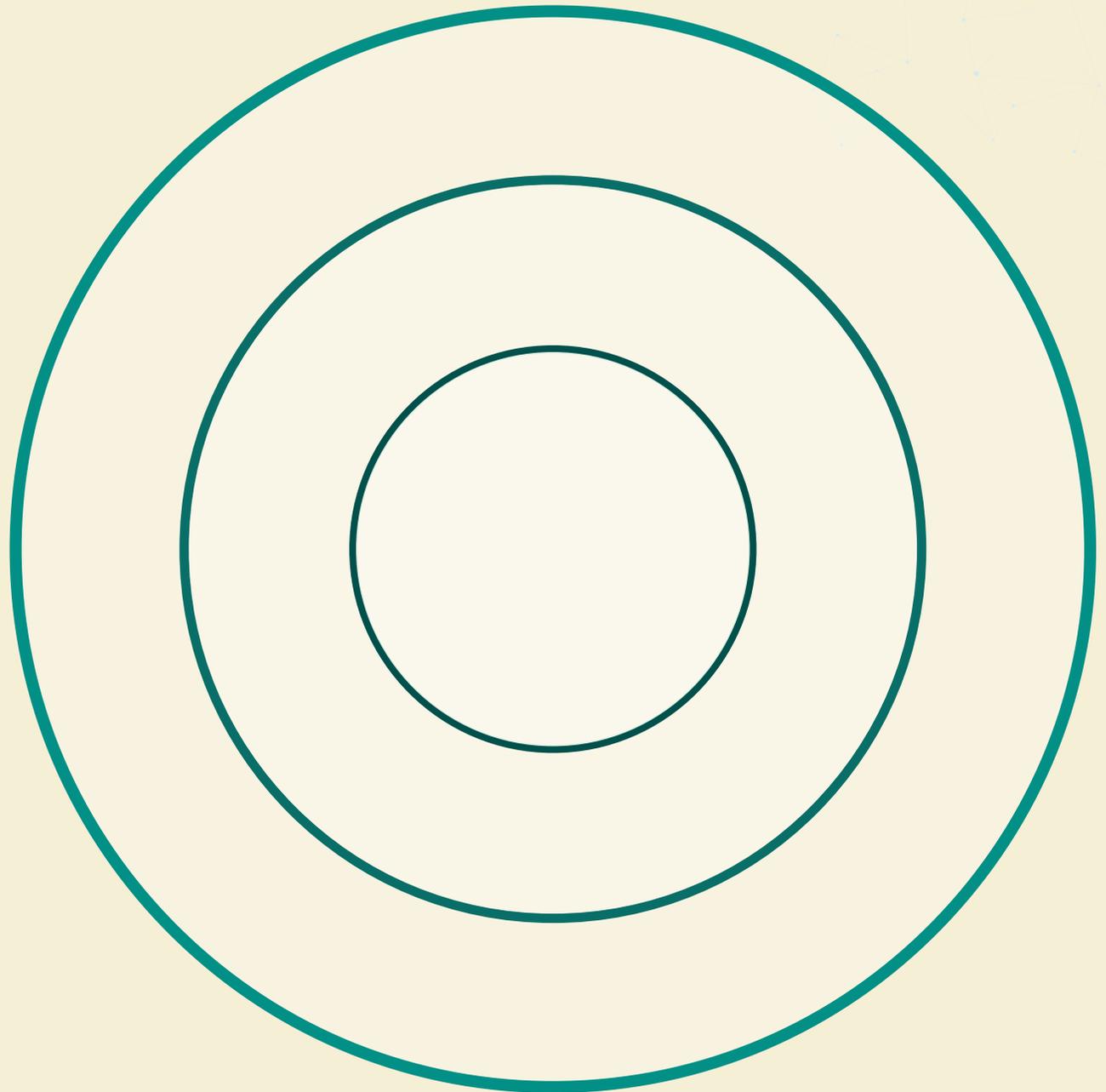
## EXERCISE

Use post-its or markers to put the names of the people and organizations you work with in the circle that best describes your relationship. This enables you to see at a glance the relationships you have with actors that support your cause and organization. This exercise can be a useful tool to identify the supportive institutional, group and personal relationships you have so you can better foster them.

**Trusted people, groups and organizations with a local presence and with whom you have a close relationship.**

**National, international and other allies that have a relationship with your organization but do not have a local presence.**

**Movements, organizations, groups and people that you do not know personally but that you know work on similar human rights issues to your organization.**



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## Developed in 2018 by Amnesty International.

This toolkit was developed as part of the project “Defending the Defenders”, funded by the Swedish Postcode Lottery, to support human rights defenders.

**Project:** “Defending the Defenders” funded by the Swedish Postcode Lottery

The ideas and concepts included in this toolkit were inspired by the work that other organizations shared with us or are the result of Amnesty International's collaboration with partner organizations. We would like to thank all the individuals and organizations that shared their ideas and knowledge with us, including:

- The Unit for the Protection of Defenders of Human Rights in Guatemala (La Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos, Guatemala, UDEFEGUA)
- Centre for Research and Promotion of Human Rights (Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, CIPRODEH)
- Peace Brigades International (PBI)
- JASS Just Associates
- Front Line Defenders
- Protection International
- The Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (La Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos, IM-Defensoras)

For more information and resources, please consult the following library, where you will find manuals and guides on protection and security for defenders:

<https://www.peacebrigades.org/en/publications/security-and-protection-resources>

