

WORKBOOK ON SECURITY: PRACTICAL STEPS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK



APPENDIX 3

Discussing risk and threat with illiterate communities

Many illiterate communities are actively protecting their rights against threats and aggression. In these communities, the Risk Formula may not resonate with them because of its mathematical format.

One way of discussing the components of the Risk Formula was devised by Lina Selano, an HRD in Ecuador:

- 1. Draw a picture in the earth of two mountains with a river running between the mountains. On one bank of the river draw the community village. At the top of one mountain is a big boulder.**
- 2. Then add in to the picture a small man who is trying to push the big boulder down the mountain towards the village.**
- 3. Finally, add in to the picture a large stick in the small man's hands, which he is using as a lever to roll the boulder down the mountain.**

Ask the community members:

- What are the risks (what might happen to the village and the community)?

(They may respond that there is a chance that the village will be destroyed, people injured or killed)

- Ask what the level of threat is in each of the 3 versions

(They may respond saying that the first version is only a risk if there is an earthquake, the second version is not much risk as the man cannot move the boulder but the third version is a big risk because the man's capacities have been increased.)

Invite community members to come and draw in the picture possible solutions to situations of risk – and point out the capacities in each solution. They may suggest responses such as:

- drag the boulder to a safer place
- keep a lookout to alert the community - parrots can be trained to sound the alarm over a wide area in response to a special noise or signal
- plant trees or cactus to impede the progress of the boulder if it rolls down the mountain
- escape in canoes down the river
- relocate temporarily to another place
- go up the mountain and escort the man away, or remove his lever
- call for assistance from neighbouring communities or organisations working on human rights

You can summarise the ideas and conclude that there are different options, which might be more or less effective at different times. The challenge is to consider all the options and assess which may be most effective.

After discussing this example, turn the discussion to the issues facing the community.

How to discuss the components of the Risk Formula.
Devised by Lina Selano, an HRD in Ecuador

