

Monitoring and Reporting
Human Rights
VIOLATIONS
— in Africa —

**A Handbook for
Community Activists**

© Amnesty International, 2002

All or portions of this document may be photocopied or stored in a database or retrieval system for use in training or monitoring and documenting, provided that acknowledgement of the source is given. Translations into African languages are encouraged, provided that prior notification has been given to Amnesty International and as long as acknowledgement of the source is given.

Amnesty International Dutch Section, Postbus 1968, 1000 BZ
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

ISBN: 0-86210-331-2

Designed, typeset and illustrated by
Wep Impressions, Kenya

Printed in Great Britain

Distributed by:
Amnesty International Africa Regional Office,
PO Box 23966, Kampala, Uganda.
Fax + 256 41 222 951. E-mail: admin-kp@amnesty.org

Amnesty International Dutch Section, Postbus 1968, 1000 BZ
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Fax + 31 20 6240889. E-mail: amnesty@amnesty.nl

Editorial Advisory Committee

Oscar Bloh, Liberia (writer)
David Anthony Chimhini, Zimbabwe
Aminata Dieye, Senegal
Bruna Lokuta Lyengo, DRC
Rojatu S.Turay Kanneh, Liberia
Chuck Scott, South Africa (proofreader)
Peter van der Horst, The Netherlands (project manager)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
About this Handbook	9
What does a local human rights monitor do?	12
SECTION I: CONTACT BUILDING	16
What is contact building?	16
Why is it important?	16
Who to build contacts with	17
Levels of contact building	18
How to build and to keep contacts.....	18
SECTION II: MONITORING	20
What is monitoring?	20
What to monitor and to include in a situation report?	21
SECTION III: FACT-FINDING	23
What is fact-finding?	23
Preparing yourself to go to the scene	24
Possible sources of information	26
Interviewing	26
Some general suggestions.....	28
Some helpful learning points when conducting an interview	30
General checklist for interviews	33
SECTION IV: DOCUMENTING AND REPORTING	37

What is documenting and why is it important?	37
Questions guiding your analysis	38
Writing a report on a specific case or incident	40
Identifying patterns	42
SECTION V: BASIC PRINCIPLES	45
Accuracy	45
Confidentiality	47
Impartiality	49
Gender sensitivity	51
SECTION VI: SOME GENERAL ADVICE	54
General	54
Linking with a human rights organization	55
In relation to security	57
SECTION VII: DEFINITIONS AND CHECKLISTS TO DOCUMENT AND REPORT SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS	59
Political killings	59
Torture	63
Sexual violence	67
Excessive use of force	70
Death in custody	74
Armed conflicts	77
ANNEX 1: WHAT TO MONITOR AND TO INCLUDE IN A SITUATION REPORT	84



INTRODUCTION

Human Rights violations are one of the main challenges facing African people today. Arbitrary arrests, illegal detention, torture and ill-treatment, rape, murder, disappearance by both government forces and armed opposition groups affect millions of people. Women, children, ethnic minorities, indigenous groups and migrants who are normally the most vulnerable of all groups, are the most affected.

Women and children are often subjected to rape and sexual abuse by police, the military, members of armed groups and even civil



servants. Children may also be abducted or forcibly recruited by armed groups, trafficked to work in coffee, tea and cocoa plantations. Human rights defenders are often subjected to persecution, harassment, oppression, torture and detention. Among victims of human rights violations are also the millions of people in rural areas throughout Africa who either do not know what their rights are or know them but do not know how to protect them.

The international community carries a responsibility for the defence of human rights in Africa. Too often international attitudes towards Africa are summed up by the word apathy. Worse still, Western governments, companies and international institutions directly contribute to human rights violations in Africa through their role in the arms trade and extracting minerals.

However, we are witnessing a new wind of change. New governments have brought a new era of respect for human rights. Some countries at war have found peace and a considerable number of refugees returned to their homes. Others have signed or ratified human rights instruments binding themselves to the observance of these rights. New institutions such as the African Union, express

the determination by African states to promote and protect human and people's rights.

The battle now is how to convert words into action and concrete improvements to the status of Human Rights across Africa, also through working with Human Rights workers at local levels.

Quite often African governments ratify treaties and sign up to action plans whilst continuing to sanction violations of human rights on a daily basis. At the forefront in exposing human rights violations are the activists, development workers, women leaders, journalists, lawyers



and others - human rights defenders - who put their lives on the line to document and publicise cases.

The role of local human rights monitors and community activists is therefore crucial in the protection of Human Rights in Africa for they are at the very beginning of the process of documenting and reporting on human rights violations in their respective areas.

Amnesty International is happy to publish this Handbook for community activists in different languages to promote the respect for human rights.

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

Local human rights monitors are often the first to hear about human rights violations or abuses¹. They are often the first to report these incidents to national human rights organisations. It is important for these organisations to get certain details about such incidents. This small handbook is meant to help local monitors to gather the right information and to report this to national organisations or their regional branches².

Local human rights monitors can be community workers, paralegals, people associated with a church or mosque, teachers, health workers, members of women's organisations, development workers, community leaders etc. This small handbook has been written for them. You don't need to know a lot about international laws or human rights to use the information in this handbook.

Human rights monitors and activists learn all the time from each other and also from talking with victims. As a monitor you will gain knowledge about human rights and the local laws. After some years of experience you may think: 'I could do more'. For more experienced human rights monitors a detailed handbook called **UKWELI** is available. It is published

by Amnesty International and CODESRIA. Most national human rights organisations in Africa will have copies or will be able to order one.

Every person is entitled to the respect of his or her human rights, whether they are African or European, adult or child, black or white. All countries have committed themselves to protect and to promote human rights. Governments have adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and have become parties to international treaties, such as the Convention Against Torture³. Despite this, governments and their agents, as well as armed opposition groups, are violating the rights of citizens all over the world: in Africa, in Europe, in the Americas, Asia and Australia.

So, why a handbook on monitoring and reporting human rights abuses in Africa? Not because there are more human rights abuses, but because we think that the work of a local human rights monitor can be more effective if a handbook is based on everyday reality. This handbook has been written by an African human rights defender working in rural areas, with contributions by others from different parts of Africa.

This handbook covers how to document and report the most common violations of civil and

political rights that take place in Africa. You may come across other violations you want to report and could use the same principles and methods as explained in this handbook.

Documenting and reporting specific violations of economic, social and cultural rights have not been included because this is a relatively new area of work that is still being developed. However, the handbook does suggest how to include economic, social and cultural factors in your overall monitoring (Annex 1).

The handbook is divided into seven sections. The first six provide information on (i) contact-building, (ii) monitoring, (iii) fact-finding and interviewing, (iv) documenting and reporting, (v) principles and (vi) some advice. The last section explains different violations and provides checklists for documenting and reporting. Annex 1 gives a checklist for monitoring and writing a situation report.

WHAT DOES A LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR DO?

The most important task is to *report* specific cases of incidents of violation to (national) human rights NGOs. Such reports should be built on facts gathered through *fact-finding* and be well *documented* to provide evidence about the violation(s).



In addition, he or she could *monitor* and report about the overall political, economic and social situation to understand why specific violations take place. A local monitor is able to identify certain patterns and provide context and background reports to (national) human rights NGOs by keeping a record of the information gathered. These reports improve the main task of reporting specific violations, but should only be taken on if the local monitor feels confident and has enough time.

If a local monitor wants to take on all these tasks, they would include:

- a. Contact-building:** building up a network of reliable people who will provide the monitor with information about the human rights situation and about specific cases or incidents;
- b. Monitoring:** the local monitor could observe and analyse the overall situation to be able to put human rights violations in a historical, political, economic and social context.
- c. Fact-finding:** the monitor conducts fact-finding through interviews and using other sources of information to gather information about specific cases of human rights violations.
- d. Documenting:** By crosschecking all the information and writing it down in a systematic order, s/he wants to find out: WHO did WHAT to WHOM? WHEN, WHERE and HOW was it done?
- e. Reporting:** the most important task is to report specific cases or incidents of human rights violations to national human rights organisations.
- f. Record keeping:** by systemically recording and storing the information about specific cases the monitor could




identify certain patterns in violations of human rights.

Working as a monitor you may find that the separate tasks overlap. For example: documenting already starts with fact-finding, because you will order the questions for your interviews in an organized way. You may have already started writing your report while you are documenting and identifying patterns. This will add to the background information gathered by monitoring.

In this handbook the local monitor is somebody providing (national) organisations with information about violations. We don't expect this person to prepare reports for publication or to approach the media.

DO I ALWAYS NEED TO USE ALL POINTS IN THIS HANDBOOK?

Using the suggestions in this handbook could help you to improve your reports about human rights violations. However, you might think that it is too much work for you to follow up on all the suggestions (for instance the suggestions about contact building and writing a situation report). It is still useful to send any reliable information about human rights



violations to human rights NGOs. Even if you don't have time to do it as extensively as suggested in this handbook, you would still need to:

- Inform the organisation about the number and kinds of sources if information you used.
- Only give the names and contact details of sources if your sources have given you permission (see Section V Confidentiality).
- Explain if you were able to confirm the information (or parts of it) and how?

CONTACT BUILDING

WHAT IS CONTACT-BUILDING?

It is about developing a network of relationships with people living in your community and vicinity that can regularly feed you with information.

Individuals and groups can provide information on a variety of local issues, incidents and developments, and possible risks and threats.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- To make it possible for you to get important and reliable information in a short period of time.
- To build a safety network. Your contacts may be able to warn you or to help you if you are in danger through your human rights activities.
- To carry out checks and balances concerning the information collected and

help you to confirm information from different sources.

WHO TO BUILD CONTACTS WITH

Your contacts could come from different ethnic, political, and religious backgrounds. They could include both women and men, young and elderly people. The wider your contacts network the better. This depends on the time you have available.

For example:

- Members of other local organisations such as women's groups, youth groups, religious organisations, traditional groups, trade unions, development organisations;
- Professionals such as doctors, teachers, journalists;
- Local workers of international humanitarian aid organisations;
- Local business people, especially women;
- Relevant government authorities;
- Local and traditional leaders, elders;
- Influential individuals in various communities.

To avoid security risks it is advisable to look for individual contacts, rather than organisations.

LEVELS OF CONTACT-BUILDING

- Collecting information at a Local level
- Reporting at regional or national level. (see section on documenting and reporting)

HOW TO BUILD AND TO KEEP CONTACTS?

- Initiate and establish a relationship based on mutual trust, confidentiality and respect.
- State clearly in the beginning what you expect of your contact persons and what



they should expect from you. This will help to avoid false expectations and misunderstandings later on.

- Care about the well being of your contact persons (put them first, rather than the information you want from them).
- Nurture the relationship by keeping in regular contact.
- Share with them the successes, challenges and difficulties of the work you are doing.

SECTION II: MONITORING

WHAT IS MONITORING?

Monitoring is being constantly aware of the general and more specific human rights situation in your community or region, through **observation** and **analysis**.



This builds a broad picture of what is going on that will help you to be alert to specific human rights violations, and to assess and make judgements on specific cases.



Compiling a **situation report** may be the best way to monitor. The report should be updated regularly and could include historical, political, economic, social, ethnic and religious aspects. It should also include events or developments that may have an adverse effect on the human rights situation. The report will help you to understand why certain violations are likely to occur and why others will be reduced or stopped (for example because of a change of police commander).

However, you will have to judge whether it is safe to keep such information in your office or at home. If there is a security risk you could send the report directly to your regional or national contact without keeping it for your own reference (see last paragraph in Section VI: In relation to security).

WHAT TO MONITOR AND TO INCLUDE IN A SITUATION REPORT?

An overview of issues that could be monitored is included in Annex 1.





Monitoring the overall situation could take a lot of time. For this reason you are advised to focus on factors that could most influence the human rights situation in your community or region. (see Annex 1)

If you don't have time to write a situation report, you should still report on specific cases of human rights violations (see box in Introduction)

SECTION III: FACT-FINDING

WHAT IS FACT-FINDING?

Fact-finding involves investigating specific incidents or allegations of human rights violations. You have to gather hard facts to make sure whether any abuses or violation(s) actually took place or not, and how they occurred. It is best to get your information from a cross section of people and sources.



You want to find out:

- What kind of violation took place
- What actually happened, what were the circumstances
- Information about the victim(s)
- Information about the alleged perpetrator(s) (doer(s) of the act)
- Possible causes
- Possible consequences or implications of the violation (political, economic, social, religious, ethnic)

- Whether it is part of a pattern of violations (see also the section IV on Documenting)

PREPARE YOURSELF BEFORE GOING TO THE SCENE

- Consider security risks for yourself and your contacts. Don't go if the risks are too high.
- Be prepared to answer questions about the reasons for your visit to the scene, or when people are suspicious about your questions.
- Use the definitions and checklists in Section VII of this handbook.
- Read documentation about previous similar violations.
- In addition, you could read particular sections of national law or international human rights standards that are related to the specific violation you want to investigate, if you have this information at hand.
- List what you know already and what you still want to know.
- List all possible contacts and sources of information and decide who you would like to meet first.

- Decide whether or not you want to meet with police, security personnel or other officials and whether this is safe.
- Look for as much information as possible about the case in question, in order to be able to state whether a violation occurred and to establish the sort of violation (using the checklists in Section VI).
- If you are able to communicate with a human rights organisation before going to the scene, you could discuss security risks and the kind of information that they think is important.
- ***Don't try to be a super detective or a hero. You should not put yourself or others in danger.***



POSSIBLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

This is a broad list that should be adjusted to the nature of the violation and the circumstances.

(a) Individual and/or groups:

- Victims
- Eye witnesses
- Relatives, friends, neighbours
- Community leaders
- Religious leaders
- Medical personnel
- Lawyers
- Journalists
- Members of the police, security forces, army, armed opposition groups

(b) Material evidence

- Hospital or medical clinic
- Police reports (may be difficult to get)
- Official response to the alleged violations (in most countries only senior officials at national level may have the authority to make a statement)
- Weapons and ammunition left behind, bullet shells. Be careful not to disturb any



material evidence on the scene if an official investigation could eventually take place.

- Body scars and wounds of the victim

Besides investigating a specific incident, fact-finding can also be:

- Prison visits: to interview specific prisoners, finding evidence of torture or ill-treatment, or to find out about prison conditions.
- Observation of a demonstration or other public event that may result in violations.
- Observation of a traditional trial or punishment by chiefs, elders or other traditional leaders.
- Trial observation in a lower court.
- Monitoring during elections, when intimidation of voters could lead to human rights violations.

INTERVIEWING

Interviewing is one of the most practical and effective means of obtaining information when fact-finding. It is important to write down words as accurately as possible. Also be aware of body language and the tone of voice, as this could add to the quality of the information.



Some general suggestions

- Prepare a checklist of information you need to gather for a specific case (see example below).

- Start, conduct and end the interview correctly (see helpful learning points below).
- Be aware of different cultural ways of framing questions and answers.
- Be aware of social and cultural sensitivities: some deeds maybe considered as acceptable (e.g wife beating); other issues may not be talked about openly. This may be particularly important when interviewing women about sexual violence. It is recommended that you ask the victim whether she or he would prefer to speak to a women or a man (if you have the choice).
- Be aware that victims may be confused and therefore could give inaccurate or contradictory facts. Victims and survivors may also exaggerate to “make it sound more true”. Some may twist the truth because they have a political agenda.
- Show respect for the interviewee.
- Conduct the interview in a safe environment to enable the person you are interviewing to speak freely.

Some helpful learning points when conducting an interview

- Introduce yourself, the organisation or group you work for, and the purpose of the interview.
- Stress the issue of confidentiality. Explain what you intend to do with the information. Ask the interviewee whether or not her/his name could be used in the report,.
- Ask permission to take notes and/or to use a recorder.
- When interviewing, look at the person and make eye contact. Don't keep your eyes on what you are writing all the time. (It is helpful for two persons to conduct an interview; one asking questions, the other writing. However, be very careful that an interview is never threatening or resembles the violation situation).



- Start with an open-ended question and allow the interviewee to tell his/her own story.
- Then go back over the interviewee's account and ask precise and simple questions in a logical order. Don't use "leading questions" to avoid suggestive responses.
- **Go into as much detail as possible**, but beware of asking too many leading questions. To get more detail it could help to ask many times: how do you know? or: How do you remember? (For example: the interviewee says that two members of the police, Mr. X and Mr. Y, assaulted him. You could ask: how do you know?)



- At the end of the interview: ask whether s/he has anything to add or has any questions. Make sure that s/he understands what you intend to do with the information and how you intend to keep the victim informed about possible next steps. Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Thank the interviewee at the end of the interview

When interviewing victims:

- Be mindful that the victims (especially victims of torture and sexual abuse) may be distressed or traumatised. Try to avoid anything that could increase feelings of distress.
- Allow the victims to tell their own stories even if parts seem less relevant to you.
- Don't make an interview too long.
- Conduct the interview in a place where the victim feels comfortable. Don't create an atmosphere of interrogation.



- Tell the victim where they can get counselling, medical care or other help.
- You may get distressed yourself because of the terrible things the victims tell you. Organise a debriefing (for instance with a colleague) after the interview that you can tell **your** story.

GENERAL CHECKLIST FOR INTERVIEWS

Specific evidence or information you should collect for a particular violation is included in Section VI of this handbook.

Information you always should ask for:

1) Personal details:

- full name
- age/date of birth
- sex
- address, telephone number
- occupation/ employment, name of employer.
- family status
- Nationality
- Religion
- Ethnic group

2) Date and time of the violation: Day, month, year, hour. How can you prove that it happened that day or that hour?

3) Place: Where exactly did the violation take place? Do you know of any witnesses?

4) What were you doing before the violation? Where were you coming from or going to? Why were you there at that place?

5) Surrounding events:

what else was happening around you? What other actions took place?

6) Details of the event: What happened, in what way, how long, how many times?

How do you remember the event took place?

How many people were victims? Give exact numbers if possible.

7) Identification of the persons/forces conducting the violation:

- Do you know the violators? Did you see them, would you recognise them if you saw them again?
- Which forces did they belong to? How do you know?
- Give full details of how many people were involved, age, sex, height, plain clothes/ uniforms, ranks, names if known.
- What weapons were they carrying, if any? How do you know?
- What type of vehicle (brand, colour, number plate) were they using?



- What was the reason or motive for the violation?

8) Witnesses: did any other members of the community or outsiders see the violation(s)? How do you know? Who were they? (Collect full details, names and addresses).

9) Injuries and damage: did the victim(s) go to a doctor, medical clinic or hospital? Collect full name and position of doctor. Is there any medical report?

10) In case of an arrest/detention:

- a) Was force used while the victim was arrested?
- b) Did they give a reason for the arrest? Did they show a warrant?
- c) Was the victim taken away? How? What vehicle? How many people? Where? How do you know?
- d) Is the victim still in custody? How many days? Where? Please state details: name and location of police station, prison or military base.
- e) Was the victim transferred from one place of detention to another? How? When? Reason? How do you know?
- f) Ask the victim details about detention conditions:

- 
- 
- i) Description of the room: size, shape, any light and ventilation?
 - ii) Were other people held in the same room? How many? Who were they?
 - iii) What were the sanitation conditions like? Was there a toilet?
 - iv) Were food and drinks provided?
 - v) Did the victim have access to medical facilities? To a lawyer?
 - vi) Were relatives or others allowed to visit?

In addition to interviews with victim(s) and witnesses, you could try to find out **responses to the incident:**

- Did the family of the victim approach the authorities to seek information?
- Was the victim formally charged before being placed in custody?
- Did any human rights organisation or lawyer act on behalf of the victim?
- Did the authorities make any public statement about the incident?

SECTION IV:

DOCUMENTING AND REPORTING

WHAT IS DOCUMENTING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



Documenting aims at collecting facts to support a specific allegation with evidence. You want to find out exactly what happened: WHO did WHAT to WHOM? WHEN, WHERE and HOW was it done?

It is a process of assessing and logically ordering and recording information about specific cases of human rights violations that have been collected through the fact-finding process. Documenting already starts during

fact-finding: while you interview people, you are already ordering the questions and answers in one-way or another (see checklist on Interviewing and Section VII).

Documenting helps the local monitor to write a useful report of a specific case and to identify patterns.

QUESTIONS GUIDING YOUR ANALYSIS

- 1) Is the allegation or the incident a real human rights abuse?** Does the incident violate international human rights standards, humanitarian conventions and/ or the national constitution or laws? To help you answer this question you have to use the definitions and checklists in the last section of this handbook. You could ask your contact in the human rights organisation for a copy of the national constitution for your reference.
- 2) Do you have all the facts needed to show that a human rights violation took place?** What is missing?
- 3) How do you know if the information is true?**

You have to assess the information gathered in interviews and crosscheck all the facts. Are all the testimonies similar or are there any contradictions? Do the

allegations “fit” with what you already know about similar violations?

WHAT DO YOU DO TO DOCUMENT A CASE OR INCIDENT?

1. Crosscheck all the answers and other information to each question. You want to know if all the answers to a question are the same or if there are contradictions. For instance: do all the answers indicate the same number of perpetrators?
2. Write down all consistent information but also the contradictions. These should also be included in your report. For example, if one victim mentioned 4 perpetrators and another one thinks it was 5, then you state: 4 to 5.
3. Add information that may provide evidence to the case, like:
 - a) Written statement(s) by the victim(s)
 - b) Written statements by witnesses
 - c) Medical evidence, medical reports
 - d) Statement issued by police or security forces.

Some helpful learning points for documenting:

- Take your time when comparing the information and do it as accurately as possible;

- Don't judge: let the facts speak for themselves.

WRITING A REPORT ON A SPECIFIC CASE OR INCIDENT

There are several ways to write a report about a specific violation. You should always comply with two ground rules:

- The report should be as detailed as possible (but keep focussed on the violation(s) you want to report)
- The information should be systematically categorised

In general a report should include three parts:

- a) The act:** *what was done, when, how, where*
- b) The victim(s):** *the individual(s) against whom the act is committed*
- c) The perpetrator(s):** *the person(s) who committed the act*

Include all the information you gathered within these three categories.

Optional: you could add information on the historical, political, economic or social context or circumstances in which the violation(s) took place



(see Annex 1: what to monitor and to include in a situation report)

Several organisations use standard formats for reporting. If you usually send your reports to the same regional or national organisation, you could ask them to give you a standard format (they may have different formats for different violations). A “report” could be a document of several pages or it could also be a letter to the human rights organisation.

In terms of the language being used, you should:

- Be concise and clear
- Avoid insulting words
- Avoid politically loaded words that may demonstrate a lack of impartiality
- Avoid being personally or emotionally involved.

IDENTIFYING PATTERNS

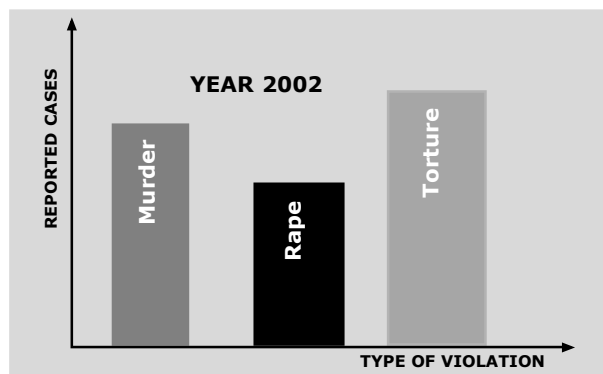
Human rights violations can be once-only incidents. Unfortunately, in many countries and in many situations, they are not isolated but part of a pattern of violations. The patterns may be the kind of violations, location of the violations, identity of the victims and perpetrators, etc. Identifying patterns could help you to improve your reports and build up a case, for instance against a specific unit of the security forces, a vigilante group or other armed (opposition) group or against the chief of a specific police station.




What patterns could you look for?

- **Identity of the victims** in terms of: religion, ethnic group, social or political group, gender, profession, age-group etc;
- **Location** of the violation: a specific village or neighbourhood, prison, police station,

military bases, secret detention centre, checkpoint etc;

- **Methods:** perpetrators often use similar methods or forms to commit killings, torture, arrests etc.
- **Circumstances** surrounding the violations may be quite similar: before, during or after elections, political gatherings, demonstrations, riots, curfew etc.
- **Identity of the alleged perpetrators:** do they belong to a specific unit of the security forces, vigilante group or other armed (opposition) group, assigned to a specific checkpoint, do they have specific ranks etc.
- **Responses of the local authorities or leaders of opposition groups,** including: statements, (lack of) investigation, nature of investigation etc.





The best way to identify patterns is by **keeping record** of all alleged cases in a systematic and accurate way. At regular intervals you could analyse the information about specific cases to identify the patterns listed above. You could add the findings to your situation report (see Section II on Monitoring).

SECTION V: BASIC PRINCIPLES

There are four main guiding principles that the human rights monitor should always keep in mind: *accuracy*, *confidentiality*, *impartiality* and *gender sensitivity*.

A. ACCURACY

What is accuracy and why is it important?

Be certain that what you are reporting actually took place. Try as much as possible to make a clear distinction between the facts, allegations, hearsay, rumours and your own or others opinions.



Accuracy is important to make your report credible to the authorities and to the public.

How do you achieve accuracy?

- Ask yourself: how reliable are my sources of information?
- Try to retrace the origin of the allegation.

- Interview the survivor(s) of the violation as well as witnesses.
- Cross-check every piece of information you have gathered with other sources.
- Assess the information and establish if certain evidence is missing.
- Gather additional information or evidence.
- Back your findings with evidence that is easy to interpret. This could include photo's, police and medical reports.
- Compare the alleged violation with similar cases to see if it is part of pattern.

Some factors that could make your case **inaccurate:**

- Starting your investigation late could lead to:
 - Evidence getting lost or misplaced
 - Survivor(s) could die or move to another place
 - Witnesses could forget important information
- Biases of your contact(s): witnesses or survivors could present false information, or under or overstate the facts for personal reasons or political affiliation.
- Your own biases: your personal or political reasons, coupled with your emotions or



prejudice may affect the credibility of the report.

- You may not be able to verify an alleged violation due to the security situation in a particular area. **Do not** give a report based on rumours without enough evidence.

B. CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is a kind of contract between you as the human rights monitor and your contacts. It is an agreement not to make the name of the contact public, unless the contact person has given permission. This may also apply to sensitive information provided by your contact.

Why is confidentiality important?

- It protects your contacts from harm or endangering their life as a result of passing on vital information. This is just as important for victims or witnesses, and for contact persons within the government, police or security forces.
- It is a way of building a relationship of trust with your contacts.
- It helps to ensure a constant flow of vital and crucial information.



How to guarantee confidentiality?

- Always ask your contact or witness for permission to use a name or a piece of information. Explain what the organisation that you are going to give the information to intends to do with it (if you know) and that you will pass on any request for confidentiality.
- Include in your report to the human rights organisation whether or not a victim or witness has agreed to use their name.
- Even if the contact agrees to use a name, you may decide that it could be too risky and include this advice in your report.
- Make use of fake names in your reports (but mention it is a fake name!) in case you contacts have asked for confidentiality.

C. IMPARTIALITY

Impartiality is one of the major guiding principles in monitoring, fact-finding and documenting human rights violations. It can be interpreted differently by different organisations in different circumstances, but for the local human rights monitor it could mean:



- Not being discriminatory and treating all victims equally. Seek the truth at all times irrespective of the victim's or perpetrator's political affiliation, nationality, religion, gender, ethnic group or class.
- Being balanced: commend the local authorities when they are protecting human rights but state the facts when they are involved in human rights violations.
- Making a clear distinction between your monitoring work and the activities of opposition groups.
- Do not only report human rights violations by government authorities, but also report human rights abuses by opposition groups (if relevant) or religious or traditional bodies.

Some helpful points:

- Don't accuse, don't judge, but state the facts.
- Avoid using stereotyping and stigmatising language.
- Try to identify the background of your source. This may help you to get a good balance in sources (e.g. not all from the same party). It will also help you to identify whether there may be a certain bias in a testimony.

D. GENDER SENSITIVITY

The rights of women and the different abuses⁴ they experience have long been ignored or neglected by the family, the community and society at large. In many societies women are regarded



as inferior to men and continue to suffer discrimination. This is a myth, developed and supported by a male-dominated culture and society. Discriminatory laws and practices can be found in:

- Laws and constitutions;
- The beliefs and cultural practices of a community (inheritance rights, lack of proper education, rape, domestic violence, forced marriage etc.)
- Little access to economic resources;
- Sexist language and behaviour;
- Family relationships.

As a result, the abuses against women and girls have been under-documented for a long time. For instance, rape during armed conflict

was never considered as a war crime until quite recently. Female genital mutilation (FGM) has long been considered as an unavoidable cultural practice; in many communities it is now increasingly criticised as a violation of girls' and women's rights.




Local human rights monitors can contribute to achieving equal rights for women and men by giving particular attention to abuses of women's rights.

How can you make your work as a local human rights monitor more gender-sensitive?

- Build a gender-sensitive contact network. Make an effort to build relationships with local women's organisations and individuals. Think of nurses, midwives, security officers, teachers, development workers etc.
- Try to include a woman if you plan to use a team to investigate a certain case, especially when investigating abuses against women or girls.

When you have to investigate alleged abuses against women:

- Be sensitive to the social and cultural attitudes and behaviours in the community



with regard to women, sexual violence, rape and sex.

- Identify influential women in the community who are advocating women's rights.
- Do not anger the men and community leaders; explain why you need to speak to some of the women in the community. Do not give up too easily if the men are reluctant.
- Use non-sexist language. Use generic terms like people, human beings, men and women, society or chairperson, rather than: man, men, mankind or chairman.
- Avoid any suggestion of "intimacy".

SOME GENERAL ADVICE

GENERAL

As a local human rights monitor you have a vital role to play. You are often the first source of information to national and international human rights organisations. This handbook will assist you to investigate and document violations in a systematic way. Yet you should be aware of the limitations of not being a professional human rights investigator:



- Don't feel ashamed to ask for assistance from specialist workers, especially if medical, forensic or legal skills are needed.
- Ask a (national) human rights NGO to further investigate a case when it turns out to be complicated.
- Ask for professional help when you encounter traumatised victims.

- Be modest in your performance as human rights monitor: you are not a police investigator or detective.
- Show respect for the traditional authorities without losing track of your mission.

LINKING WITH A HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION

It is important for the local human rights monitor to be linked with a human rights organisation. You will send your information or reports to them, either on request or on your own initiative. The sort of relationship and the frequency of communication will depend on the situation in the country and the circumstances you are in.

There are national human rights NGOs in each country in Africa and most of them are based in the capital. In several countries they may have regional offices and/or they organise fact-finding missions to investigate specific incidents. In other countries the human rights organisations may not have the capacity or the resources for such operations.

If you are close to an office of a human rights organisation, or if you have other means of communication, you are advised to consult with them regularly. If possible you should

consult them before you start investigating a specific allegation or incident. They may be able to advise you on what to investigate specifically, which people you should interview, and you could discuss security risks.

In many parts of Africa communication will be difficult, particularly if you are living in a very remote area. In most cases a human rights organisation will have asked you to monitor the local human rights situation.

It is important that you agree with them on some ground rules:

- Who is your contact in the organisation?
- How often will they get in touch with you? How?
- How could you send your reports to them?
- What kind of information do they want to get? Only facts about specific incidents? Do they expect you to monitor the overall situation and identify patterns, or is that something they will do themselves?
- Do they have a format for reports?
- If you have information they cannot use but which you feel is relevant, can they pass it on or tell you with whom to get in touch?

- What to do in case security forces or others are threatening you?

IN RELATION TO SECURITY

Those responsible for human rights violations usually do not appreciate investigations into their acts. Human rights monitors have often been threatened, tortured and even killed. As a monitor at local level you may be particularly vulnerable because you are far away from places where other human rights defenders and the media could come to your help. Apart from your own security you should also consider the safety of your family and of your contacts. You should therefore operate very cautiously.

Some helpful points:

- Keep quiet about your monitoring activities; be prudent in all your activities.
- Be careful with the words you utter, how you say them and where you say them.
- Only use contacts you fully trust.
- Inform the local organisation you belong to or you are in touch with when investigating a particular case. If possible, consult your contact in the human rights organisation beforehand and conduct a risk assessment together with them.

Emphasise their responsibility for your security.

- If possible, ask security officials who you can fully trust to warn you if they hear about the possibility of arrest or other threats. Consider the security risks of such relations very thoroughly.
- Change movements and plans where necessary.
- ***Don't take risks that could put your life or that of your family or contacts in danger. Investigating one violation is not worth another one.***



SECTION VII:

DEFINITIONS AND CHECKLISTS TO DOCUMENT AND REPORT SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

1. UNLAWFUL AND DELIBERATE⁵ KILLINGS

A. Not all killings are human rights violations

- Some killings are considered to be a crime. They are handled under your country's criminal law. For example, an armed robber who kills the owner of a shop.
- Some killings by the state (a police or security official) are not a violation of human rights. For example, if a police officer kills somebody who is trying to kill another person, it would not be a human rights violation, provided that the police officer used the minimum force necessary.

B. Killings are human rights violations when:

- They are carried out directly or by order of a government or with its complicity or approval⁶; for example: taking part in the

killing or not doing anything to stop or prevent it;

- They are deliberate (intentional) and not by mistake or by accident;
- They are unlawful (violating national and international laws).

The difference between these killings and the ones mentioned above (A) is that the government machinery is used to carry out killings that are not allowed by law.

C. Killings are also human rights abuses when the parties in an armed conflict violate the laws of war. These laws prohibit:

- Wilful and intentional killing (execution) of defenceless people such as prisoners of war;
- Deliberate and or indiscriminate killings (executions) of civilians

The laws of war apply also to **armed opposition groups**.

NB. It may also be a human rights abuse if a suspect is killed by *mob justice* or *justice by ordeal*, or by vigilante groups, and the authorities do nothing to stop or prevent the killing, or fail to carry out investigations, or do not charge and bring to court those who may be responsible,.

CHECKLIST to help establish whether a killing is a human rights violation

1. In your report about the killing(s) you should answer the same questions (1-5 + 7 and 8) as the ones used in the generic list for interviews on page ... In addition try to fill in the following information:

2. Nature of the killing(s)

Number of victims:

Killings happened during or following:

- Police/security operations
- Military operation
- Riots/demonstration
- Inter-communal fighting
- Arrest
- Imprisonment
- abduction
- other

3. Description of the killing(s)

What happened? In what way? How do you know it happened that way? Who ordered the killing(s)? What could be their reasons or motives? Why do you think it was a political killing (see A – C above)?

Was any property:

- damaged
- destroyed
- stolen
- confiscated
- other

4. Causes of death

Causes of death (e.g. gunshot, severe beatings):

5. Circumstances

Briefly describe the events leading up to the killings (e.g. armed conflict, military attacks, political unrest, etc.)

2. TORTURE

Torture is inflicted⁷ on people and can take various forms. These include: beatings that cause severe pain (e.g. with guns, with clubs, with wires, by kicking etc), hanging by the arms or legs, buried up to the neck, put under water for a long time, forced to look at the sun, electric shocks, rape, sexual assault, mock execution, pulling finger or toe nails, cutting of ears or limbs, cutting with knives, using burning candles or cigarettes etc.



What is the definition of torture?

The UN Convention Against Torture gives three characteristics:

- The infliction of severe pain or suffering, either physical or mental or both;
- By, or with the consent, support or knowledge of the state authorities
- It is not carried out by accident, but for a purpose. Reasons could be:

- To gain information or a confession
- To punish, intimidate or humiliate the victim
- For reasons based on any kind of discrimination (e.g. for being a women, having another religion, coming from another ethnic group etc)
- Does the second characteristic - involvement of state officials – mean that torture by **armed opposition groups** cannot formally be called torture? The answer is: the laws of war (the Geneva Conventions) prohibit torture and ALL armed groups in a conflict situation have to abide by these laws.
- Torture through *justice by ordeal*, *mob justice* or inflicted as punishment by traditional justice could be a human rights **abuse**; it could also be a human rights **violation** if the authorities do not prevent such acts or carry out investigations.

Where can torture take place?

Torture often takes place during detention: in a police station, prison, military camp, or secret detention centre. Persons that are not formally arrested can also be tortured. During armed conflict torture can also take place in the victims home, in a village, street, or field.

Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment

refers to harsh or neglectful treatment or punishment that could damage a person's physical or mental health.

P r i s o n conditions may be so bad that this amounts to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.



CHECKLIST to report an act of torture:

Please see the points for interviewing (torture) victims in Section III on Interviewing.

1. In your report about a torture case you should answer the same questions (1 to 5 plus 7 and 8) as the ones used in the generic list for interviews on page xxx. In addition try to fill in the following information:
 2. **Nature of the incident**
What methods were used? How often? For how much time? What materials or instruments were used? Who committed

the act of torture? Who else were present? Who ordered the torture? What could be their reasons or motives?

3. Why do you think it was torture?

Try to establish whether the incident had the characteristics of torture mentioned above.

4. Nature of the injuries

- how and where on the body was the victim tortured?
- did the victim bleed or have swellings?
- does the victim have visible scars?
Please describe in detail, if possible
- is the victim still suffering?

5. Medical report

Did the victim go to a medical clinic or hospital? Did s/he see a doctor? Did the doctor make a medical report? Add any medical statement or pictures of the injuries to your report.

3. SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence includes many different types of acts, such as:

- Rape
- Indecent assault (touching a woman's breast or vagina or a man's penis)
- Forced marriage
- Sexual slavery
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM, also called: Sexual mutilation)
- Forced pregnancy
- Sexual harassment



The majority of people who suffer from sexual violence are women and girls. However, men are also victims of some of the abuses⁸ mentioned above.

There is no legal international definition of sexual violence. But all countries have definitions within their national laws.

Possible definitions of some acts of sexual violence are:

Rape: the forceful, non-consensual (without agreement) penetration of the human body with the penis or with other objects such as sticks or bottles.

Forced marriage:

- A woman or a girl given in marriage by their parents or relatives, without the right to refuse;
- A woman, on the death of her husband, is inherited or transferred to a relative of the husband without having the right to refuse.

Sexual slavery usually involves women, particularly young girls. An individual or a group of men hold them against their will, to provide sexual services as well as to perform other domestic work. This takes place most often during armed conflicts.

Female Genital Mutilation of women and girls involves the forced removal of part, or all, of the female genitalia (sexual organ) against their will.

Forced pregnancy refers to all acts of sexual violence that are aimed at making a woman pregnant against her will.

Sexual violence as torture

For the human rights monitor it is important to keep in mind that acts of sexual violence can be torture, but that not all cases of sexual violence are necessarily torture. An act of sexual violence is torture if:

- a. It causes acute suffering;
- b. It is inflicted for a purpose (not by accident), such as obtaining information, punishing, intimidating, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, and
- c. When done by a state official or with the knowledge or support of state authorities, or
- d. When done by members of an armed opposition group.

CHECKLIST: to establish whether an act of sexual violence is torture, please use the checklist for torture cases in part 2 of Section VII.

4. EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

Law enforcement officials (police, security forces etc.) may have to use force in the course of their duties. However, the use of force should be the **exception** rather than the norm. They may use force only:



- When strictly necessary: after all non-violent methods have been used without being effective. In other words: if they have no alternative;
- In performing their duties such as: to protect life, to prevent crime, to carry out a lawful arrest.

The use of force that does not meet these two criteria is **excessive** and unlawful. In most countries the laws include strict rules for the use of force by law enforcement officials. The United Nations has also adopted a Code of Conduct for law enforcement officials and a set of rules for when they may use firearms.

When is the use of force excessive?

- When the act of the officer(s) is unlawful. For example: security officers forcibly break into the house of a suspected man; when he asks for a warrant (lawful) they beat him up and break his arm when arresting him (unlawful).
- When the officers are using force to arrest somebody for a minor offence and the person does not resist at all.
- When officers use force to arrest an aggressive person, without first trying non-violent means. For example: they start beating an aggressive drunk man with clubs without even trying to calm him down.
- When peaceful demonstrations are dispersed by the use of force and to the participants are injured. This often happens when
 - The authorities order officers to disperse a demonstration by the use of any force necessary
 - Troops that have not been properly trained to deal with civilians are used for crowd control (like military or security forces)

CHECKLIST to report use of excessive force

1. In your report about excessive use of force you should answer the same questions (1 to 5 plus 7 and 8) as the ones used in the generic list for interviews on page 33. In addition try to fill in the following information:

2. Nature of the incident

Demonstration. Was the demonstration peaceful?.....

Arrest.....

Other.....

What happened? Did the police try peaceful means first? Who ordered the use of force? How do you know? What kind of force was used? Are there any pictures of the demonstration or arrest?

In case of a demonstration: what steps were taken by the organisers to avoid problems? Did they get permission from the authorities? Were there marshals? Did they try and calm the situation?

3. Why do you think the force used was excessive?

Try to establish whether the force was excessive, using the above information.

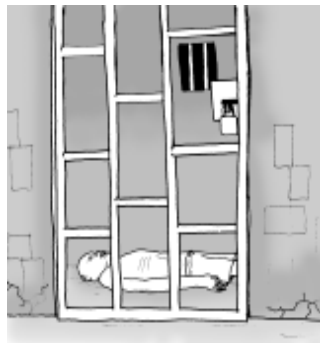
4. Nature of the injuries

How was/were the victim(s) injured? What injuries did the victim(s) have? Are there any pictures of injuries? Medical reports?



5. DEATH IN CUSTODY

Custody refers to state security officers, police or an armed opposition group holding people in detention. This could be in a prison, a police station, military camps or secret



detention centres. This also includes checkpoints, an immigration office at a border crossing, at an airport or even a police vehicle. Death in custody is when a person dies in one of these places.

It will be a human rights violation when a death results from:

- Summary execution. For example, when a suspect was killed immediately after arrest, without charge or trial.
- Torture. For example, if the police have tortured somebody to make them confess and the person dies of the injuries.
- Ill-treatment. For example, when somebody in prison dies as a result of denial of food or medical care.

- Excessive use of force. For example, riot police have kicked and beaten a demonstrator so badly that he or she dies.

Are all deaths in custody a human rights violation?

The answer is no. When is it not a human rights violation?

- When a prisoner or detainee dies from natural causes or illness, such as a heart attack or cancer.
- When security officials kill a prisoner out of self-defence.

However:

- Natural death may be a result of poor prison conditions, overcrowding etc. in which case it still is a human rights violation.
- It is quite common for authorities to claim that a prisoner was killed while trying to escape, when in fact it was an unlawful killing.

CHECKLIST to establish whether a death in custody was a human rights violation

1. In your report about a case of death in custody you should answer the same

questions (1 to 5, 7, 8 and 10) as the ones used in the generic list for interviews on page ... In addition try to fill in the following information:

2. Cause of death

What was the cause of death? (e.g. gunshot)

.....
Description of the state of the victim:

.....
What were the circumstances of the death?:

.....

3. Why do you think it was a death in custody?

Try to establish whether the death in custody was a human rights violation, using the information above.

6. ARMED CONFLICTS

The history of most African countries has been, and continues to be, marked by violent armed conflicts. Although the motives and intensity may be different, these conflicts are accompanied by widespread



human rights abuses⁹. These include: torture, summary executions, political killings, rape, sexual slavery, death in custody, arbitrary arrest, killing of prisoners of war and the indiscriminate killing of civilians. The majority of the victims of these conflicts are not soldiers but civilians – most of them women and children. The involvement of children as soldiers in these conflicts by both armed opposition groups and government forces is a violation of international laws and sometimes national law.

Many of the human rights abuses that happen during an armed conflict are the same as the

ones dealt with in the previous chapters: political killings/summary executions, torture and ill-treatment, sexual violence, excessive use of force and death in custody. As a local human rights monitor you will have to document and report these abuses using the procedures described in those specific chapters.

In this chapter you will find some advice how to monitor and document violations and abuses that are particular for armed conflicts.

To monitor and document human rights abuses in armed conflicts may be dangerous. Before you go to the scene you need to assess all risks involved for you, your colleagues and the people you will talk to. Discuss whether it is safe to go or not with your organisation or others you can trust.

1) Killings

Keep in mind that not all killings are human rights violations. For example: killings that result from fighting between government troops and an armed faction are not human rights abuses.

2) **Deliberate or indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population**

Indiscriminate: in armed conflicts troops often shoot **recklessly** on anything that moves, without making a distinction between soldiers or civilians.

Deliberate: sometimes civilians are even killed **on purpose**: by way of reprisal or revenge, because they are accused of taking sides with the other party etc.

Such killings are violations of the laws of war and as a monitor you should consider them as human rights abuses.

3) **Deliberate mutilations**

Cutting of ears, legs, arms etc. are a form of **torture**.

4) **Abuses against children**

- a) The use of **child soldiers**: the minimum age for any young person to take part in war is 15 years old. The United Nations want it to be 18 years old. No army or armed group should enlist children under 15 (18) into their fighting forces; not even if the children volunteer to fight, for instance to take revenge for the killing of their parents, or as a means of survival.

- b) Child soldiers or other children who are arrested should not be placed in the same prison as adult prisoners or in unofficial detention centres. They should be allowed access to their relatives or organisations working on their behalf, like the Red Cross.
- c) In many armed conflicts children are used as sex slaves (see chapter on sexual violence).
- d) Children should not be subjected to hate speech about other ethnic groups as a way of recruiting them as soldiers.

CHECKLIST to report on the use of child soldiers

- a) Are children under 15 involved in fighting?
- b) With which army or armed group?
- c) What are the names of the child soldiers?
- d) In which village or town are their parents living?
- e) When did they leave their parents? Why?
- f) What are the details of their activities?

5) Use of "hate speech"

It is important for local human rights monitors to report "hate speech" about

other ethnic or religious groups or advocacy for violence. Both could be signs of rising conflict.

Amnesty International defines "hate speech" as the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that incites people to discrimination, hostility or violence. "Hate speech" aims at destroying the rights of others and putting people up to racial or ethnic hatred, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, or other forms of intolerance. It may take a variety of forms, such as: threatening; abusive or insulting behaviour; publishing or distributing material or delivering speeches inciting hatred.



There are many examples of hate speech but the most notorious one in Africa is urging the Hutu majority in Rwanda to rise up and decimate the Tutsi and Hutu that sympathised with the Rwandan Patriotic Front.

6) Refugees and displaced people

Armed conflicts often cause high numbers of refugees and displaced people.

CHECKLIST for reporting on refugees and displaced persons

- a) Did people leave their homes out of fear of fighting, or were they forced to leave by government troops or armed groups?
- b) How many people have arrived?
Approximately how many women, children, men?
- c) What provisions have been made for shelter, food, health, and safety? By whom? Are there any special provisions for traumatised women and children and for women giving birth?
- d) How are they being treated by the local people?
- e) How are they treated by the (local) authorities, by the security forces or armed opposition group?

- f) Are people from different backgrounds (ethnic groups, religion, region) together in one camp? Does this cause tensions or problems?

WHAT TO MONITOR AND TO INCLUDE IN A SITUATION REPORT

Monitoring the overall situation could take a lot of time. You are advised to limit the scope of the report and decide which factors could influence the human rights situation in your community or region. For example:

- **History** such as: original inhabitants of the region, (local) wars, former rulers;

- **Political information** such as:
 - **Structure and operations of local authorities:** chiefs, police, security forces. Who has the real power over what? Conflicting competences? Names of chiefs/commanders: any recent changes with positive/negative effect? Political affiliation? Are the local authorities accountable to their people?
 - **Political parties:** which party is most active? Which one has most support? Are opposition parties able to function freely

in your region or are they intimidated?
Do they have influence on local affairs?

- **Legal information** such as:
 - o How effective is the formal justice system? Do the local people have access to a formal court?
 - o Which kind of cases do the local chief or community elders judge? What punishments do they impose?
- **Security information** such as:
 - o What is the overall level of freedom of movement, freedom of association and freedom of the media?
 - o Do the police or security forces put restrictions on the legal freedoms of the people?
 - o Are there any checkpoints? If so, what is the attitude and behaviour of the guards manning these checkpoints? Can they be easily identified based on their uniforms? What kind of weapons do they carry?
 - o Are people from particular religious, ethnic or political background more harassed, intimidated, arrested, tortured by police or security forces than others?

o How are refugees, internally displaced persons or returning refugees being treated?

■ **Economic factors** such as:

o What are the job opportunities? If there are, who gets employed, and on what basis?

o How do ordinary people make a living (with special reference to women and children)?

o What are the working conditions for labourers? Any labour unrest?

o What are the natural resources in the community/region? Who controls them? What are the benefits to the people?

■ **Social factors** such as:

o Are schools available for young people to attend?

o Are there hospitals or clinics? Do they have essential drugs and trained staff?

o What is the position of women and children?

o Are there any problems with land rights?

o What is the influence of traditional secret societies or other traditional spiritual leaders?

- **Population:**

- o What is the ethnic and religious background of the people? Does this cause tension?
- o Are there many refugees or internally displaced persons? Are they a cause of tensions?

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR MONITORING:

- Your own observations and contacts
- Local newspapers, radio (take into account that their messages could be biased)
- Official reports or reports from local and international NGOs
- Local civil society organisations (development, religious, women, trade union, student etc)
- Local business people and drivers of public vehicles
- Refugees and internally displaced persons, returning refugees
- Travellers
- Police and security forces
- Court documents, prosecutor (if court exists at local level)
- Prisoners and prison officials
- Health and community workers

(Footnotes)

¹ There is a difference between human rights **violations** and human rights **abuses**. In this handbook the term “violation” is used when **governments** are responsible for violations of international human rights law. The word “abuse” is a more general term that also applies to **armed opposition groups** breaking international humanitarian law or to **civilians** acting against international human rights law.

² In some instances a local human rights monitor may even have direct communications with an international organisation.

³ The full name of this convention is: UN Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

⁴ In this paragraph we are using abuses instead of violations because women suffer from assaults by civilians (e.g. husbands) as much as from assaults by government officials (see also footnote 1).

⁵ Deliberate: intentional, planned, purposeful

⁶ In the official UN definition they say: with complicity and acquiescence. Complicity means: conspiracy, collaboration. Acquiescence means: with agreement, with approval.

⁷ Inflicted: applied, forcibly imposed on

⁸ In this paragraph we are using abuses instead of violations because women suffer from assaults by civilians (e.g. husbands) as much as from assaults by government officials, vigilante or other armed groups (see also footnote 1).

⁹ Because government forces as well as armed opposition groups are involved in armed conflict often, we use in this paragraph the more general word abuses in stead of violations (see also footnote 1)