WORKBOOK ON SECURITY:

PRACTICAL STEPS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS

APPENDIX 16

Overcoming Resistance to Security Planning in your Organisation

The following text is reproduced with thanks from Chapter 2.3, *New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders*, Enrique Eguren and Marie Caraj, published by Protection International, 2009.

In this chart are some common resistance stereotypes, the reasoning behind those stereotypes and possible responses to overcome those resistance forces.

COMMON RESISTANCE STEREOTYPES	REASONING BEHIND THE STEREOTYPES	RESPONSES TO OVERCOME RESISTANCE
"We're not being threatened" or "our work is not as exposed or contentious as other organisations' work."	• The risk stays the same, it doesn't change or depend on the fact that the work context might deteriorate or that the scenario might change.	• Risk depends on the political context, and the political context is dynamic: so is the risk.
"The risk is inherent in our work as defenders" and "we are already aware of what we are exposed to."	• The defenders accept the risk and it does not affect them in their work. Or, the risk cannot be reduced, the risk is there and that's all there is to it.	• Meeting with inherent risk does not mean accepting the risk. • The risk has at least a psychological impact on our work: it induces at the very least stress which affects the work. • Risk is made of objective elements: threats, vulnerabilities and capacities: vulnerabilities and capacities belong to the defenders and are the variables on which defenders can work. By reducing vulnerabilities and increasing capacities, the risk can be reduced. It might not be eliminated altogether which does not mean that it cannot be reduced as much as possible.
"We already know how to handle the risk", or "we know how to look after ourselves" and "we have a lot of experience"	• The current security management cannot be improved and it is therefore not worth doing it. • The fact that we have not suffered harm in the past guarantees that we won't in the future.	• Security management is based on objective elements that can be worked on. • Look around and see how many defenders have suffered harm although they were highly experienced.
"Yes, the issue is interesting, but there are also other priorities."	• There are more important issues than security of defenders.	• Life is the priority. If we lose it, we will not be able to deal with all the other priorities.

COMMON RESISTANCE STEREOTYPES	REASONING BEHIND THE STEREOTYPES	RESPONSES TO OVERCOME RESISTANCE
"And how are we going to pay for it?"	• Security is expensive and they cannot be included in fundraising proposals.	• How much do you think security costs? Quite a few security factors are behavioural and do not cost a penny. • Investors will prefer to invest in an organisation covering security issues instead of running the risk of losing their investment.
"If we pay so much attention to security we won't be able to do what is really important which is working with people and we owe it to them."	"If we pay so much attention to security we won't be able to do what is really important which is working with people and we owe it to them."	• Security is a matter of life or death. • Because we owe it to people, we cannot run the risk of losing our lives. • People run risks by entrusting us with their cases and if we do not work on our security it will affect them too; they might choose to use another organisation that has adequately planned its security and is thus also giving more security to other people.
"We don't have time as we are already overloaded."	• It is impossible to find time in the work schedule	• How much time do you think security takes? • How much time do we spend reacting to emergencies instead of prevention? (most probably far more than the time required to plan security into our work)
"The community is behind us: who would ever dare hurt us?"	• We are part of the community. The community is not fragmented, does not change both in members and opinions. • The community cannot be influenced.	• The community is not homogeneous and is also made up of those who might be affected by our work.
"In our village, authorities have shown understanding and collaboration.	• Local authorities are not affected by our HR work and will not change their minds. • There is no hierarchy between national and local authorities.	• Organisational historical memory will have examples of local authorities opposing HR work when their tolerance limits have been exceeded. • Local authorities have to implement orders from above. Authorities are made of people who might have an interest in protecting aggressors. • Political contexts change.