WOMEN UNDER SIEGE
COURSE ON DOCUMENTING CASES OF SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

GAZIANTEP, TURKEY
9 – 12 DECEMBER 2013

COURSE REPORT: ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED

WITH THE SUPPORT OF
1. Background and Mandate

The Course on Forensic Investigations of Cases of Political violence was organised by No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ) in partnership with the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU) and the Violations Documentation Center (VDC), with the support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The training took place from 9 to 12 November 2013 in the city of Gaziantep, where a number of international NGOs and international organisations have been based since the start of the Syrian crisis. No Peace Without Justice invited experts Mr Glynford Morgan, Mr David Smith and Ms Emilie Pottle to share their expertise with 27 participants.

The training aimed to reinforce participants’ capacities on the collection, assessment and preparation of documentation on sexual and gender-based violence for use in accountability processes. The training was designed to foster practical discussion on a common cooperative and coordinating framework among the different professionals involved in the process of documentation, investigation and prosecution. According to participants, Syria’s liberated areas lack institutional capacity, which contributes to a lack of accountability, which could be mitigated by an institutional framework that can be put in place today by NGOs, human rights activists, police forces, lawyers and judges who are active in Syria’s liberated areas.

Various UN bodies and representatives, as well as international and national NGOs, have documented specific forms of violence targeting women committed during the Syrian crisis. Despite the extreme difficulty to measure the extent of these violations due to the situation on the ground, it is likely that women are increasingly the targets of such abuses by government forces and other armed groups. Therefore, the purpose of the training was to acquaint participants with relevant techniques and mechanisms for the collection, evaluation and secure storage and dissemination of information and evidence related to sexual and gender-based human rights violations. With increased capacity to manage information and conduct analysis safely, local Syrian actors and the international community could play a more effective role in harnessing this information and rendering it useful for deterring future atrocities, encouraging desertion from units involved in their perpetration and laying the foundation for future accountability.

Specific objectives of the training included the processes for documentation techniques and requirements; the assessment and processing of documentation; and the requirements and preparation of information and evidence to be presented before accountability mechanisms, including national and international criminal courts. Concrete examples from other conflicts were used to illustrate the best practices and lessons learned to help in the improvement and streamlining of current efforts inside Syria. The expertise of the presenters on the mechanisms of the International Criminal Court was shared with participants to assist them in the preparation and fulfilment of format requirements for possible future use of information by the ICC. However, the presenters stressed the need for the development and establishment of adequate accountability institutions within Syria itself. On the basis of lively discussion groups with participants, the information received during the presentations was put into the practical framework of implementation in Syria’s liberated areas.

This four-day training course is part of an NPWJ transitional justice project aimed at reducing the expectation and rewards of impunity and at building a culture of accountability, and in particular to strengthen Syrian civil in the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly against women and children, as well as challenging impunity for such crimes. The purpose is to equip citizens to demand accountability and justice for violations taking place on a daily basis for the past two and a half years and, at the same time, to equip the judiciary and legal profession to answer that demand.1

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1 For more information on the project, see http://www.npwj.org/node/6557 (accessed on 14 January 2014).
2. Course Summary

2.a. Participation

The Course on Documenting Cases of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence was attended by around 27 participants. Participants in the training included representatives from the ACU, VDC, lawyers, judges, police officers, women rights activists, social workers, moderate religious leaders and representatives of informal associations and NGOs working on investigation and documentation inside Syria from Aleppo, Damascus, Raqaa, Homs, Hamah and Idlib. The newly-appointed Ministry of Justice of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, Mr Fayez al-Daher, and the Vice Minister of Justice, Mr Anwar Majanni, also attended the training. During the training, representatives of foreign governments, international organisations and NGOs attended the sessions as observers.

2.b. Presenters

The presenters for the Training Course were identified by NPWJ and consisted of experts in the specialised areas addressed by the course:

**David J. Smith:** Mr Smith has worked in law enforcement for more than 34 years, as Detective Chief Inspector in the Metropolitan Police as well as serving as a Senior Manager in the UK’s Serious Organised Crime Agency (Now NCA). Mr Smith has extensive experience working with Interpol and Europol and he delivered as well trainings and assistance to State bodies tasked with fighting Organised Crime (SIPA). For the last year, Mr Smith has been working privately and has been back to Bosnia a number of times to deliver trainings, assess Instructions and training manuals.

**Emilie Pottle:** Emilie Pottle is a barrister in private practice in London specialising in criminal, international and human rights law. She prosecutes gender-based and sexual violence in the criminal courts and represents victims of sexual and domestic abuse in family proceedings. Emilie was a clerk to HE Philippe Kirsch at the International Criminal Court and part of the defence teams of Sobodan Praljak before the ICTY. She is currently part of a defence team before the ICC.

**Glyn Morgan:** Glyn Morgan works as an independent consultant, helping emerging and post-conflict societies countries to establish war crimes accountability and criminal intelligence capacity and currently provides analysis training for the Institute for International Criminal Investigations. He started his career in 1982 as an Infantry officer in the British Army where he specialised in reconnaissance and intelligence. On leaving the army he joined the UK police and worked for five years as an intelligence analyst on complex organised crime cases involving commercial fraud, drug trafficking and facilitated illegal immigration. He joined ICTY in 1995 on secondment from UK Foreign Ministry where he established the “Serb warring factions” desk within the Military Analysis Team in the Investigations Department. Three years later Mr Morgan became the senior intelligence analyst in the Bosnian-Serb Leadership case, coordinating the intelligence relating to President Karadzic and General Mladic. He also provided intelligence consultancy to ICTR. In 2001 Mr Morgan joined Europol -the EU criminal intelligence agency- where he performed a number of roles as a senior intelligence officer, including three years as the Liaison Officer for the Western Balkans.

2.c. Training program

The content and format of the Training Course curriculum was developed by NPWJ in co-operation with the presenters’ team, based on their previous experience and the background of the participants.
The final course program is attached to this report and shows the full range of topics covered by the Training Course.

2.d The sessions

2.d.i The opening

During the opening session of the training, a presentation of the team and of the course was provided. Content and expectations from participants was discussed including logistics and practical information of the training.

At the start of the training, NPWJ’s Syria Project Coordinator, Mr Al Khateeb, welcomed the participants and presented the NPWJ project and the program of the course, its content, agenda, logistics and practical information. Presenters introduced themselves and their field of expertise. Participants also presented themselves and their respective roles and expertise related to documentation of cases of sexual and gender-based violence and described their expectations for this training.

2.d.ii Day one: the legal framework

The first training session, presented by Ms Emilie Pottle, focussed on International Humanitarian Law as the regulation of both the conduct of soldiers during hostilities and the treatment of civilians during those hostilities. War crimes are defined as serious violations of International Humanitarian Law and are based on the presence of both contextual elements (a link to an international or internal armed conflict), factual elements (such as sexual assault or rape) and mental elements (the perpetrators must have the requisite intent). The elements constituting a war crime are available in Arabic on the International Criminal Court’s website and were presented in detail by Ms Pottle. All documents referred to during the training week were distributed to participants in electronic format. During a question and answer session, participants further consider the elements of war crimes on the basis of the examination of concrete examples they have witnessed or documented within Syria. Ms Pottle continued to deepen the theoretical framework on Crimes Against Humanity, as certain prohibited acts committed during a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population. Key elements are the systematic approach, defined by a political plan by high ranking authorities, or the widespread scale of attack.

The International Criminal Court tries the most serious violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), but to today does not have jurisdiction over the situation in Syria. Syria did not sign the Rome Statute establishing the ICC, nor did the UN Security Council reach a consensus to refer the case to the ICC. While participants repeatedly express their concern and disappointment over the lack of consensus at the international level to refer the case to the ICC, presenters stressed the importance of already creating and strengthening internal national accountability mechanisms within the liberated areas through cooperation and coordination on transitional justice. Those mechanisms can include criminal trials, truth commissions and reparation programs.

The newly appointed Minister of Justice Al-Zaher visited the training during the morning of the first day. He thanked NPWJ and ACU for the organisation of this training course and for focusing on sexual and gender-based violence as a breach of International Humanitarian Law, as it is being used as a weapon of torture and a tool of war to destroy the revolution and the Syrian social fabric. Vice Minister Anwar Majanni and Judge Khaled Alhelo accompanied the Minister of Justice.

The afternoon session began with a question and answer session on the topics of the morning session, in order to deepen some aspects and details related to IHL and the Geneva Conventions, especially
concerning the definition of military and civilian locations that can or cannot be targeted during an armed conflict.

Ms Pottle’s session further focused on sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) from a juridical point of view. She explained how the recognition and concrete and effective reporting on these crimes as war crimes has only been established relatively recently. The UN Commission of Inquiry has found that SGB crimes in Syria are generally under-reported and documented within Syria, especially when it concerns sexual violence inflicted by men on other men. She stressed the fact that this crime can be committed both by men and women and be inflicted on both men and women. It is fundamental that the need to report and document these cases is highlighted among the population. Ms Pottle further demonstrated the different acts that can be considered as SGB crimes.

Presenters and participants engaged in a discussion on the main difficulties investigators and documenters face when reporting and documenting cases of SGBV (due to psychological, social, cultural and religious issues, as well as safety and security for the victims); the difficulties provided by the current (in-) existing legal framework in the different areas of Syria; and the absolute need to overcome such difficulties in order to document and create files for future trials and other accountability mechanisms, regardless of whether such mechanisms will be provided on an international or national level.

From this point, participants and trainers discuss the availability of judicial mechanisms on a national and international level. Mr Morgan points out that at present, the International Criminal Court has not been given a role. Participants discuss to what extent the current Syrian legal framework is adapted to deal with the crimes that have occurred in the past two and a half years of conflict. It was agreed that while there are judicial possibilities in the liberated areas of Syria, they are different from one area to another and there is a different understanding among the participants coming from different areas. There is individual but not institutional capacity, so the need for institution-building through coordination and cooperation among individuals and different organisations was highlighted.

The first day concluded with the daily wrap-up and the filling out of the daily evaluation forms by participants, to provide adequate and daily feedback to NPWJ staff and trainers, in order to adapt the training as much as possible to the needs of participants.

2.d.iii Day two: an overview of documentation of SGBV

On the second day, Mr Morgan started by addressing best practices and lessons learned from other contexts to discuss processes of documentation and investigation. He explained the difference between information, intelligence and evidence before a Court: while the bulk of information may not be useful in itself, through the process of collecting, assessing and transforming it, it may become intelligence with which we can do determinate things. However, intelligence may still contain error and false information. It needs to be corroborated and controlled, to be turned into evidence, which is fool proof and may be used before a Court. Intelligence is useful for reconstructing the narrative of events and identifying witnesses, but it is not yet evidence. If and when the ICC will come into play in the Syria context, all intelligence gathered will be re-investigated by the ICC to be put in a particular format to be presentable before the Court as evidence. This is not just the case for the ICC but before any court, which needs a specific format for presenting evidence. Within Syria today, it is almost impossible to know what format will be expected for evidence. We therefore need an institutional approach to formatting intelligence into evidence. The intelligence cycle (direction, collection, evaluation, collation, analysis and dissemination) might provide such an institutional model, ensuring that the work done by different organisations on the ground can be coordinated and lead to useful end products.
In the current context it is essential to link the crimes that make up the crime base (i.e. the totality of crimes committed during a conflict) to the top of the command pyramid through the documentation of patterns and the context in which the crimes are taking place. Mr Morgan pointed to the lack of attention for the evidence linking the crime base to the commanders on the basis of participants’ examples of documentation within Syria today and engaged in a practical discussion of how this can be overcome in the future. During the discussion, the participants from the defected officers presented a documented incident about their office in Aleppo being bombed. Mr Morgan gave feedback on how this documentation can be improved and the way the police officers should think about linking the crimes at the crime base level to the top of the command pyramid.

Participants asked about the responsibility of the person who committed violations under threat of death. In general international law, duress is not a defence for criminal responsibility but judges take it into account during sentencing. In the Rome Statute, in limited circumstances it is a defence, but the accused must prove there was an immediate threat to his or her life. Participants also asked about the responsibility of Shabiha committing crimes when they are an armed group but not officially part of the military. The use of non-professional soldiers is not a crime, but crimes committed by those soldiers are crimes that attract criminal responsibility as much as crimes committed by the Syrian army. In an armed conflict, it is common that the parties of the conflict include forces that are not official military. The rules of the IHL apply to people who are taking part in hostilities whether they are official soldiers or not and anyone who breaches those rules might be held criminally.

Mr Smith presented the session on end-products of SGBV documentation. He started the session by asking participants to write down about what they understand by the word “documentation”. Mr Smith presented documentation as micro documentation, like Forensics report, Medical reports, Individual reports etc.; and macro documentation, which shows the bigger picture and the strategic overview, official documents, official logbooks etc. Participants noted a challenge that the regime has moved into making secret verbal orders, which is very hard to prove. Mr Smith suggested that by gathering the information and evidence around those secret orders, there will be other things that will tend to prove the existence of those verbal orders. Mr Smith and Ms Emilie discussed with participants about the different ways documentation products can be used specially for Transitional justice purposes.

Mr Morgan presented the session on managing SGBV documentation. Once information has been collected it needs to be managed in such a way that the information is going to be retrievable, useable and survivable. Mr Morgan invited participants to think about how they would manage information coming in. Participants provided their ideas on what steps can be taken to make sure that the information is going to be valuable and useful. The key points include documentation of the source and contact/follow-up details; source protection; chain of custody/contamination; collation and storage; registration; evaluation and corroboration; identifying information gaps; dissemination and exploitation. Participants and Mr Morgan discussed the best way to handle documentation using examples they are facing. Special attention was given to video collecting evidence and witness protection.

Mr Smith presented the session on potential sources and documentation. Sources, to be understood in the widest possible sense, drive the investigation, information and intelligence gathering. During the session, participants discussed the importance of sources to guide and support investigations; produced a list of potential sources that can be utilised to exploit and assist their enquiries (source strategy); analysed the different sources identified; outlined in general terms how to locate, treat, and, if needed, secure sources; and explored what methodology of documenting these sources is practical and available. Further specific attention was paid to dealing with people in general, and victims in particular, as sources.
At the end of the session Mr Morgan reiterated the importance of elevating attention from the crime base, where crimes are prosecuted in peacetime, to the top of the command pyramid, where crimes can be prosecuted under IHL. Sources may give a lot of information concerning the crime base, but with the right questions and attention, they may provide a lot of useful information on patterns and linkage to the top of the command pyramid. Participants gave examples of how such a connection can be established on the basis of witness information. Rape is committed by soldiers in captured villages, at checkpoints and in prisons: this can show the connection between the crime base and the conflict. Victims can also provide further information about patterns in relation to the circumstances in which these violations took place: uniforms, badges, places, other victims and so on.

The day concluded by the daily wrap up and evaluation.

2.d.iv Day three: specific sources for SGBV documentation

On the third day, presenters started by addressing outstanding questions on the content of the previous days. They engaged in a question and answer session on concrete examples participants face in their daily environment and work, such as the value of particular testimonies as evidence of sexual and gender-based crimes. The main difficulty they have encountered lies in the fact that when only the victim is available for testimony, it is hard to make this evidence the basis for a conviction before a Court. Presenters stressed both the fundamental importance to document every piece of information before considering its value as intelligence and possible evidence and the difference between individual crimes such as rape under domestic law (crime base) and prosecuting rape as a pattern on the basis of IHL (command pyramid).

All documentation efforts rely on sources providing information. The next sessions were dedicated to examining those sources more in depth. Under IHL, it is fundamental to move beyond the simple crime base and look at the nexus, patterns and command structures to allow for international prosecution. Every source type can provide information on these kinds of patterns and command structures. First, the crime scene is examined closely as a source of investigation and documentation. Participants considered what kind of crime scenes should be considered in the current context; what problems investigators may be facing to investigate those scenes; what particular kinds of activity (physical collection information) will be done to document the crime scene; and how a crime scene can contribute to preparing an international humanitarian law case.

Mr Morgan invited participants to consider all the different scenes from the examples they have been giving over the course of the training and consider other physical scenes they have faced, to find the answer to the questions posed. The answers were being discussed on the basis of participant’s input. Common crime scenes used in international humanitarian law: impact points, detention centres, execution sites and mass graves. There are a number of problems associated with documenting these kinds of crime scenes: physical impossibility to visit the crime scene; lack of authority to visit that crime scene; the time lapse after which the scene can be accessed; the limited time available at the crime scene due to security or other issues; the integrity of the crime scene may be compromised and damaged, which limits the amount of information available and its credibility; and the lack of training, equipment and expertise of the documenters. It is furthermore important to consider whether legitimate targets can be found near impact sites to establish whether an attack was legitimate or not under IHL. The activities to be carried out on a crime scene include establishing direction, a visual recording of the crime scene, sample taking, documenting marks, collect artefacts and gathering victims and witness statements. Carrying these activities out on different crime scenes, and establishing patterns linking those different scenes, can contribute to establishing criminal responsibility of the commanders under IHL.
To close the session, Mr Morgan invited the Police General from Aleppo to read out a report on a recent military attack on their (civil) police station in Aleppo. The report was discussed among participants and presenters to determine what content is lacking. Particular attention was paid to the civil status of the police station, which should be documented to avoid future accusations of military involvement, legitimising the attack as a legitimate target.

The next session by Mr Smith focused on witnesses as sources. He defined the different categories of witnesses, different strategies to engage with them and different ways of documenting witness statements. He stressed how direct victims are the first, but not the only, valuable source of information. Other professionals working on the ground must be taken into consideration: police and military officers, militia members, medical personnel, experts and international NGOs. The impartiality of witnesses is a very important factor to guarantee the reliability of the documentation collected. There are several strategies to challenge the witness in order to highlight his or her partiality.

Mr Smith stressed the importance of witness testimonies to draw a wider picture, linking the single criminal event experienced by the witness to the general context, which may help to document not only the single crime, but also repeated patterns and possible signs of chain of command involving high ranking officers. The witness may have seen what army groups were involved or what military badges the perpetrator wore; heard possible orders from officers; be able to identify the type of helicopter or fighter jet involved and so on. Witnesses may not necessarily be involved directly in events occurring at the crime base, which is why witness strategies are crucial, to ensure the selection of possible witnesses that may provide crucial information to establish the link between the crime base and the top of the command pyramid (e.g. troop transportation officers, people who painted helicopters with different colours in order to confirm news about the use of strangely coloured helicopters and so on). Presenters and participants engaged in a discussion on the ways of conducting interviews, considering the ample experience of the defected policemen and judges present, to highlight best practices and ensure the usefulness of collected statements before national and international courts.

The third source under close consideration was medical records and other official documents, presented by Mr Morgan. He addressed the challenges and difficulties people can face in seeking access to these sources of information. The importance of ante mortem data, previous medical records and forensic investigations was stressed, to build an information file that exceeds the single crime under investigation. Also on this subject, a practical discussion was held on the realities faced in this regard in the field by participants.

Mr Smith continued with a fourth source: communication. Participants were asked to identify the different types of communication that may be used when committing SGB crimes; discuss how and why such communication is vital as a source for documenting instances of SGBV; and state specific ways in which such sources can be documented in a format that retains the authenticity of the product. Participants provided answers from their experience, while Mr Smith enhanced these examples by providing best practice insight on the basis of concrete examples from other conflicts.

Mr Al Khateeb continued with a session on digital security. He explained and demonstrated different ways of encrypting files through different electronic devices and available open source software. He also engaged in a discussion with participants to understand how they currently store and protect data and how they may improve this in the future.

Mr Morgan highlighted the importance of risk assessment in order to avoid or mitigate security risks related to carrying out investigative work and provided participants with some ground rules to use during documentation to avoid at all points to become a casualty or fatality themselves.

The day concluded by the daily wrap-up and evaluation.
2.d.v Day four: intelligence, cooperation and coordination

The fourth day started with a follow-up on outstanding questions regarding the overlaps and opportunities from national and international accountability mechanisms from the previous day. Mr Al Khateeb welcomed and presented Mr Paolo Bononi, representative for the Italian Cooperation, and thanked him for attending a session of the training. He also welcomed and introduced the representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The representatives thanked the participants for their presence and engagement and No Peace Without Justice for the organisation of the event.

Through the concrete discussion and re-examination of real examples, participants demonstrated a growing awareness of the importance of the crime pyramid and working on all its aspects to connect the crimes on the ground with the commanders within the regime. Presenters reiterated that information on the crime base, working up to the top of the pyramid, can be gathered from all the sources discussed over the past days. Standard operating procedures may be very valuable to ensure that full advantage is taken from the use of sources.

Ms Emilie Pottle presented the final part of the “Intelligence Cycle”: Dissemination. How can the products of documentation efforts be used in the most effective way? It is not yet clear what mechanisms may be available to the Syrian people in the future: there may be international criminal prosecution mechanisms, or only national ones; there may be truth and reconciliation commission, etc. However, the collection of information today, although the dissemination mechanisms may not yet be clear, is fundamental, because any future mechanism will base itself on this kind of information. They may re-investigate all documented information, but the intelligence collected will be fundamental in assisting them in doing this job. Therefore it is important to focus on the content rather than the format of the documenting efforts. One of the great strengths of documentation efforts in Syria today is the great number of different independent organisations involved. At the same time, it poses a problem: having so many different organisations involved with different methodologies means there may be inconsistencies in different reports on the same events. The primary advice to the documenters to ensure effective dissemination in the future is therefore to coordinate and cooperate between groups.

Mr Morgan continued to present the process of analysis of documentation as part of the Intelligence Cycle. It is very important to visualise a “Sequence of Events Chart” to allow for proper linkage and pattern analysis of data on the crime base: a chart picturing various events, activities and people, to discern how an event evolved over time and fits in a broader scale of events. This analysis is key to determining the direction of future investigations and to determine possible chains of criminal responsibility. Patterns can be used to discern an analysis of the chain of command and orders of battle and link them.

Mr Smith presented the final session on cooperation and coordination. Within the room, eight different documenting and investigating groups are represented, which gives a good sample of what is happening on the ground. This session served to identify the practical problems of ensuring cooperation across a large area that has been subject to large-scale conflict; to discuss and produce solutions to the issues identified above; and to analyse models of cooperation and coordination.

Participants engaged in a lively discussion on the difficulties, including lack of mutual trust and ideological differences, which prevent effective coordination and cooperation. Many organisations working on documentation are not driven by the need to coordinate and cooperate, resulting in the loss of important information and analysis. Participants agreed on the need for groups to come together and construct one single database to secure major benefits. Dialogue among different groups is crucial to initiate such a process and participants agreed on the importance of the opportunity provided by the training to meet and establish initial dialogue among themselves.
Mr Morgan closed the presentations with a final discussion on consolidation and asked participants for their impressions to enrich the next training. The key points of the training course are reiterated: agree on what “documentation” is; look above the crime base; fully exploit liberated areas; write it down; content more important than format; back it up; coordinate activity; and disseminate.

2.d.vi Conclusion of the training

The trainers and staff of No Peace Without Justice thanked the participants for their presence and active participation. Presenters thanked the participants for taking the risks associated with coming to Gaziantep to engage in this week’s training and expressed the hope that their expectations may be fulfilled and that they will find the possibility to share their experiences with their colleagues inside Syria and to put their knowledge into effective practice.

Mr Al Khateeb reiterated the commitment of No Peace Without Justice in supporting participants’ efforts in disseminating the information learned and shared, by fostering the communication network with participants through Skype and social media. He reminded participants to inform No Peace Without Justice about their initiatives to allow NPWJ to assist them in their activities and to express their interests for future training topics to NPWJ staff.

Participants expressed their gratitude to the presenters and No Peace Without Justice for the very useful information obtained and committed themselves to apply their acquired knowledge in the field. Participants filled out the overall evaluation form for the training, in addition to the daily evaluation forms, to allow NPWJ to improve future trainings. Participants each received their Attendance Certificates and USB sticks with documentation provided by presenters to further their work on documentation of sexual and gender-based violence in the field.

The training concluded with the reading of a poem on the hope of a New Syria.

3. Assessment and Recommendations

This four-day training course is part of NPWJ project aimed at assisting existing and nascent civil society organisations and networks to contribute most effectively to Syrian transitional justice documentation and policy discussions, with a specific focus on sexual and gender-based violence. This will in turn help shape the future of their country towards institutions that embrace principles of democracy and pluralism and that offer redress and accountability for human rights violations and promote reconciliation. It does so in part through information sharing and training and in part through capacity-building among Syrian civil society actors to receive and coordinate external assistance, especially on transitional justice and accountability issues.

Over the past three years, systematic sexual and gender-based violence has been documented by activists and international organisations, raising concern in the international community and underlining the need for a proper documentation systems and procedures among Syrians working in the field. The lack of and need for a proper institutional framework within Syria to deal with such cases was underlined by the Syrians partners and stressed during the training by the participants. They encouraged NPWJ to follow up in the coming months and organise other meetings and trainings on these topics to offer specific training and skills, both regarding the nascent national framework and the international framework for accountability.

Another primary purpose of the Training Course was to enlarge NPWJ networking with Syrian NGOs and Syrian institutions and extend the possible beneficiaries’ base and partners. Participants were debriefed regularly throughout the course through daily and general evaluation forms.
There were, as anticipated, lessons to be learned in terms of what if implemented will strengthen future training programs in terms of their participation, role of presenters and content and structure of the course program.

3.a. Participation

In this training, 27 to 30 participants participated, including four women. NPWJ should continue to support wider female participation and promote the active role of women within society. Most of the participants involved had background relevant to the training content. All participants are in their own capacity involved in the collection, documentation and investigation of human rights violations, be it as documenters, police investigators, lawyers, judges and NGOs. For this training, the presence and active involvement of women organisations was sought and partially obtained. From a geographical point of view, different Syrian regions were represented: Aleppo, Damascus, Raqqa, Homs, Hamah and Idlib.

The active participation and interaction with the presenters using workshops and discussion moments in addition to informal meetings during coffee breaks and meals were very important and both participants and presenters underlined how in future activities these activities should be further developed and encouraged.

Recommendations:

− Continue the active promotion of the participation of women during the trainings, both with partner organisations and in participant selection processes;
− Understand better the level of expertise participants have and try to discuss their expectations from the training course earlier;
− Ensure secure sharing of participants lists to protect participants safety;
− Regional diversity could be broadened through intensified relations with Local Councils and other NGOs or informal organisations operating inside Syria;
− In the selection process, religious and ethnic affinity should be taken into consideration to ensure a diverse composition of the group; and
− Follow-up with defected police officers from Aleppo on trainings they request through their coordination office in Gaziantep. This is the first group which started to work on the ground.

3.b. Presenters

The presenters at the Training Course were of the highest quality and experts in the issues under discussion. Thanks to their previous experience in other contexts worldwide they were able not only to provide participants with the theoretical framework, but also to explain how local populations in cooperation with international experts in many other difficult experiences have managed to carry out and empower effective investigations in cases of sexual and gender-based violence, notwithstanding the difficulties and obstacles they faced. It was of specific importance to enhance understanding on international accountability mechanisms among participants and to encourage their proper involvement in the accountability process to support accountability efforts taking place inside Syria. The need for cooperation and coordination on the basis of best practices and lessons learned was stressed in this regard. The relation among presenters and participants was helped by the great work of the simultaneous interpreters.
Recommendations:

- Identify experts who can speak Arabic, where possible, to enhance the interactive experience among participants;
- Make sure that presenters are aware of the Syrian justice situation and the documentation situation;
- Make sure that trainers include practical exercises reflecting the Syrian context are part of the training course;
- Ensure follow-up with presenters and consider the possibility to develop new activities and project on the topic of sexual and gender-based violence; and
- Follow-up with presenters and participants to develop possible raising awareness campaigns.

3.c. Training Program

The Training Course curriculum was based on specific requests coming from Syrian partners. The presenters designed the program according to relevant issues on the documentation of sexual and gender-based violence, covering processing, investigative and legal techniques and requirements. Future training courses should continue to build on this model, keeping most of its elements and making some improvements based on lessons learned.

Participants and presenters all agreed that the exercises and modules that incorporated theoretical scenarios are extremely useful and effective and should be developed and taken in consideration for future activities in this field. This encourages the concrete coordination and cooperation among participants on this subject, as well as the discussion among participants and the wider Syrian society on the creation of a comprehensive institutional framework.

Recommendations:

- Ensure follow-up activities, both with presenters and participants, in order to develop new activities and follow-up projects on the ground;
- The agenda should be open to adaptation and change to address concrete needs expressed by participants;
- Develop a referral strategy with international organisations, which can follow up on the needs of participants;
- Fostering the networking among participants to ensure coordination and information exchange;
- Facilitate the follow up among presenters and participants to build a strong connection between Syrian and international civil society.
ANNEX I

Training course program

Day 1 - Monday, 9 December

10:00-11:30: OPENING SESSION (presented by Hadi al-Katheeb)
- Introduction and overview of the course
- Introduction of participants & expectations
- Logistics

INTRODUCTION TO IHL (presented by Emilie Pottle)
- Aspects of IHL
- Contrast with domestic law
- International Criminal Court & Rome Statute
- Contribution to TJ

11:30-12:00: Coffee Break

12:00-13:00: GROUP DISCUSSION (presented by Emilie Pottle): How do participants consider IHL within context of future Syrian accountability efforts?

13:00-14:30: Lunch Break

14:30-15:30: SGBV in IHL (presented by Emilie Pottle):
Latest developments and current situation in SGBV prosecution:
- Legal aspects
- Offender motivations
- Special considerations and importance of ante-mortem data
- Records and verbal information
- Cultural and religious aspects
THE INTELLIGENCE CYCLE (presented by Glyn Morgan)
- A process model for organising and conducting effective documentation of SGBV

15:30-16:00: *Coffee Break*

16:00-17:30:
DIRECTING SGBV DOCUMENTATION (presented by David Smith): End-products of SGBV documentation

17:30-18:00: *Daily wrap-up*

**Day 2 – Tuesday, 10 December**

10:00-11:30:
ORGANISING SGBV DOCUMENTATION (presented by David Smith): Practical considerations to ensure effective documentation, including guided brainstorming to compile a list potential sources that participants can exploit in their SGBV documentation efforts

MANAGING SGBV DOCUMENTATION (presented by Glyn Morgan): Overview of measures to ensure that what is collected is traceable, reliable, survivable and useable for prosecuting SGBV

11:30-12:00: *Coffee Break*

12:00-13:00:
SOURCE TYPE 1: VICTIMS OF SGBV (presented by David Smith)
- Group exercise to consider the following aspects relevant to this source type:
  - Collection
  - Collation
  - Evaluation

13:00-14:30: *Lunch Break*

14:30-16:00:
SOURCE TYPE 2: SGBV CRIME SCENES (presented by Glyn Morgan)
- Group exercise to consider the following aspects relevant to this source type:
  - Collection
SOURCE TYPE 3: WITNESS TO SGBV (presented by David Smith)

Group exercise to consider the following aspects relevant to this source type:

- Collection
- Collation
- Evaluation

16:00-16:30: Coffee Break

16:30-17:30:

SOURCE TYPE 4: MEDIA (presented by Glyn Morgan)

Group exercise to consider the following aspects relevant to this source type:

- Collection
- Collation
- Evaluation

Day 3 – Wednesday, 11 December

10:00-11:30:

SOURCE TYPE 5: MEDICAL INFO ON SGBV (presented by Glyn Morgan)

Group exercise to consider the following aspects relevant to this source type:

- Collection
- Collation
- Evaluation

10:00-11:30:

SOURCE TYPE 6: COMMUNICATIONS (presented by David Smith)

Group exercise to consider the following aspects relevant to this source type:

- Collection
- Collation
- Evaluation

11:30-12:00: Coffee Break
12:00-13:00: SOURCE TYPE 7: DOCUMENTS (presented by Glyn Morgan)

Group exercise to consider the following aspects relevant to this source type:

- Collection
- Collation
- Evaluation

13:00-14:30: Lunch Break

14:30-16:00: ANALYSIS (presented by Glyn Morgan)

Techniques for converting raw material into persuasive product

- Association analysis
- Crime pattern analysis (+ mapping)
- Target package

SECURITY (presented by Hadi al-Katheeb)

Practical means to safeguard people and information

16:00-16:30: Coffee Break

16:30-17:30: COOPERATION & COORDINATION (presented by David Smith)

Practical means to introduce synergy of documentation with other activists

19:30 – 21:30: SOCIAL DINNER

Day 4 – Thursday, 12 December:

10:00-11:30: DISSEMINATION (presented by Emilie Pottle)

- Products
- Exposure strategy
- Provision to prosecution bodies and other accountability processes
CONSOLIDATION 1 (presented by Glyn Morgan)
  ➢ Drawing together the results of the workshop into some form of useable guidance product

11:30-12:00: Coffee Break □

12:00-13:00:
CONSOLIDATION 2 (presented by David Smith)
  ➢ Agreeing next steps for SGBV documentation approaches; How will the product be used? How will future synergy be created? Etc.

13:00-14:30: Lunch Break

14:30-16:00:
COURSE REVIEW (presented by Hadi al-Katheeb)
  ➢ Participants feedback on the good, the bad & the ugly as a means of improvement for future courses

COURSE CLOSURE (presented by Hadi al-Katheeb)
  ➢ Speeches, certificates etc.
ANNEX II

PARTICIPANTS LIST

Participants
For security reason the complete list of participants and their names cannot be published. The participants represented different organisations: Free Syrian Lawyers (3), defected Police Unions (5), Violations Documentation Center (3), Women Organisations (3) and the ACU. Participants included defected judges, lawyers and police officers. Four women attended the training and different minority groups were represented.

Observers
1. Mr Tarek Shazli (Representative of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs);
2. Mr Shafiq Al-Hamwi (ACU);
3. Mr Paolo Bononi (Representative of the Italian Cooperation Office);
4. Mr Dominic Morris (Representative Foreign and Commonwealth Office);
5. Mr Henry Smith (Representative Foreign and Commonwealth Office);

Presenters
1. Mr Glynford Morgan;
2. Mr David J. Smith;
3. Ms Emilie Pottle;
4. Hadi Al Khatib.

Guests
1. Ministry of Justice of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces Mr Fayez al-Zaher, on 9 December 2013;
2. Vice Minister of Justice, Mr Anwar Majani, during the whole training.