



# **‘LET US BE A PART OF IT’**

**Community Engagement by  
the UN Peacekeeping Mission  
in South Sudan**

**CENTER FOR  
CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT**  
RECOGNIZE. PREVENT. PROTECT. AMEND.

# RECOGNIZE. PREVENT. PROTECT. AMEND.

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COVER

*Scene from the Protection of Civilians (POC) site  
situated adjacent to the UNMISS "UN House"  
compound where more than 38,000 internally  
displaced persons are taking shelter.  
October 25, 2017*

UN Photo/ Niktarios Markogiannis  
Report designed by Dena Verdesca.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION AND VISION**

Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) works to improve protection for civilians caught in conflicts around the world. We call on and advise international organizations, governments, militaries, and armed non-state actors to adopt and implement policies to prevent civilian harm. When civilians are harmed, we advocate for the provision of amends and post-harm assistance. We bring the voices of civilians themselves to those making decisions affecting their lives.

CIVIC's vision is for a future where parties involved in conflict go above and beyond their legal obligations to minimize harm to civilians in conflict. To accomplish this, we assess the causes of civilian harm in particular conflicts, craft creative solutions to address that harm, and engage with civilians, governments, militaries, and international and regional institutions to implement these solutions.

We measure our success in the short term by the adoption of new policies and practices that lead to the improved wellbeing of civilians caught in a conflict. In the long term, our goal is to create a new global mindset around robust civilian protection and harm response.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Lauren Spink, Peacekeeping Advisor at CIVIC, authored this report. Research for the report was conducted by Spink and Evan Cinq-Mars, CIVIC's United Nations Advocacy and Policy Advisor. It was reviewed by Marla Keenan, Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy and Alison Giffen, Peacekeeping Director. In addition, several UN and humanitarian officials provided invaluable feedback on early drafts. Dena Verdesca designed the report and prepared it for publication. CIVIC's work on this project was made possible by a grant from the German Federal Foreign Office.

CIVIC is grateful to the many humanitarian actors and United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) officials who shared their ideas and their time with our staff. They work to protect and engage civilians in a complex and challenging environment, often at personal risk to themselves.

Many of the civilians who spoke with CIVIC during our research have endured years of violence displacement, and uncertainty. We greatly appreciate them taking the time to speak with us, and we are aware of our obligation to make sure their words are translated into policies and practices that address their protection concerns.



*Peacekeeper troops from China, deployed by UNMISS, patrol on foot outside the premises of the UN Protection of Civilians (PoC) site in Juba, South Sudan, on October 4, 2016. According to the UN, since the fighting last July in the capital and the increase of sexual violence outside the PoC, UNMISS has intensified its patrols in and around the protection sites, as well as in the wider Juba city area.*

Albert Gonzalez Farran

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*Members of the Rwandan battalion of UNMISS worked with the local community in Kapuri, a town on the outskirts of the capital Juba, along with the Rwandan community in South Sudan, to clean the Kapuri Primary School. January 28, 2017*

UN Photo/ Isaac Billy

“Despite its challenges, community engagement is a critical aspect of UNMISS’s efforts to protect civilians.”

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the past four years, government and opposition forces in South Sudan have waged a civil war that has destroyed the country's economy and social fabric, displaced millions of civilians within and outside of the country, and resulted in famine and severe food insecurity affecting half of the country's population. Parties to the conflict have routinely targeted civilians and subjected them to a range of devastating abuses, including targeted and ethnically based killing, widespread sexual violence, continuous waves of looting, and intentional deprivation of basic food for survival. The South Sudanese armed forces, rather than contributing to the government's responsibility to protect civilians, have been the primary actors responsible for violence against them. In this landscape of horrors, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is often the main actor capable of and willing to protect civilians under threat of violence.

It is vital that international and regional bodies, including UNMISS, engage in formulating political solutions to the ongoing conflict in South Sudan. However, in a country where economic and political elites allied to armed groups have used violence as a tool for political and personal gain with near-complete disregard for the well-being of civilians, it is also vital that UNMISS and other international actors place civilians at the center of their protection and peacebuilding efforts. Engaging with communities is essential to mitigating the immediate violence perpetrated against civilians and to righting the distorted power dynamics and violence that have plagued the country for six decades.

While important in the South Sudanese context, community engagement is a challenging activity for peacekeepers. UNMISS is mandated to protect civilians under threat of physical violence across a country the size of France with few communications and road networks and a long rainy season that significantly hampers access to large swaths of some of South Sudan's most conflict-affected areas. In addition, the government has systematically blocked UNMISS from accessing areas precisely when the security situation begins deteriorating in those locations and when protection concerns are highest. Moreover, the government has monitored civil society organizations (CSOs), their meetings, and their leaders, and has targeted some with detention and violence. This environment has caused many CSO leaders to leave the country, made it difficult and potentially dangerous for UNMISS to engage with CSOs, and therefore

undermined the strength of this potentially important interlocutor. In many cases, UNMISS officials have had to adapt peacekeeping and engagement tools to non-permissible and rapidly changing circumstances.

The Protection of Civilians (POC) sites are another distinct feature of the conflict landscape. When civil war broke out in 2013, tens and then hundreds of thousands of civilians fled to safety inside and around UNMISS bases, creating internally displaced person (IDP) camps that are referred to as POC sites. Four years later, these POC sites still host over 200,000 civilians. The sites have created unique opportunities and challenges for UNMISS to engage civilians.

Despite its challenges, community engagement is a critical aspect of UNMISS's efforts to protect civilians. When done effectively, it can allow UN actors to better understand the environments within which they are operating. Without engaging communities, a peacekeeping operation may struggle to identify protection threats and deteriorating security situations. In addition, community engagement by a peacekeeping operation can serve as the foundation for mediation and peacebuilding to prevent or end conflicts driving violence at the local, subnational, and national levels. It can also facilitate better awareness of a mission's mandate, capabilities, and limitations, which is key to maintaining missions' credibility and legitimacy. Finally, engagement is an important tool for missions to monitor the impact of their activities so they can adjust and improve them. Without effective engagement, a peacekeeping operation will likely struggle to understand the effects of its operations on the civilian population, as well as how civilians perceive these actions.

The importance of community engagement for protecting civilians was recognized in the 2015 report by the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), which advocated a "people-centered" approach to peacekeeping and a "renewed resolve on the part of UN peace operations personnel to engage with, serve, and protect the people they have been mandated to assist."<sup>1</sup> The Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping released by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Field Support (DFS) also calls for a community-based approach, including planned consultation, empowerment, and a "do no harm" mindset.<sup>2</sup>

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1 United Nations, *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations*, June 16, 2015, para. 29.

2 United Nations, *DPKO/DFS Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping*, para. 27.

Although the link between community engagement and improved protection for civilians in peacekeeping operations is well established in United Nations (UN) policies, little operational guidance has existed for peacekeeping missions at the field level until recently. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support (DPKO/DFS) are in the process of developing a practice note on community engagement for peacekeeping operations. Once finalized, this guidance will be an important resource for missions. However, it will offer broad reflections rather than acting as a template, and will not be a substitute for strategic community engagement planning and implementation by missions.

CIVIC's research, conducted from January to April 2017, found that although UNMISS was implementing some laudable community engagement activities, there was no strategy for community engagement guiding the work of Mission personnel. Each division of UNMISS was interacting with civilians in different ways, and a lack of a coherent strategy undermined the Mission's ability to leverage various strengths and types of engagement across its divisions. The lack of strategic planning could also undermine the deliberate selection of activities and continuity of programming that are necessary to create a lasting impact. CIVIC concluded that more and improved strategic planning on community engagement could ensure that engagement activities were coordinated across Mission sections, that jointly compiled information and conflict analysis underpinned community engagement, that engagement was not harmful to civilians, and that UNMISS focused on the activities most likely to lead to more effective protection rather than engaging in places and with populations that are most accessible.

Since CIVIC began its research in February, UNMISS launched its own review of community engagement practices and has begun to develop a community engagement strategy that could guide its interactions with the civilian population. This is an important development, moving peacekeeping practice toward the vision of a people-centered approach to peacekeeping outlined in the HIPPO report. As UNMISS moves forward with more strategic community engagement planning and implementation, many additional questions will need to be answered, including how the community engagement strategy is linked to UNMISS's overall protection of civilians strategy and objectives, as well as where engagement is most likely to lead to improved protection and who are vital interlocutors for UNMISS. Some of these decisions should be influenced by consultation with UN agencies, other humanitarian actors, and South Sudanese civilians.

This report is based on interviews with UNMISS officials across Mission sections, humanitarian officials, South Sudanese civil society leaders, and civilians. Drawing on information from these actors, it examines some of the issues that a community engagement strategy could address, providing analysis on questions of who and where the Mission should engage and what new community engagement tools and capacities may be required as part of a strategy. For example, CIVIC's findings indicate that greater engagement with women, youth, and civilians in the general population outside of societal leadership structures could improve UNMISS's awareness of protection threats. UNMISS will likely need to build engagement capacity outside of the POC sites, shift some of its resources from one-off to repeated engagements, and consult carefully with humanitarians and civilians to mitigate risks to civilians as it attempts to bring together communities from inside and outside the POC sites. Reviewing the role and capacities of community liaison assistants and the Public Information Office to make them more efficient and empowered engagement tools could also serve the Mission's protection goals. While UNMISS conducts a variety of engagement activities with political and governmental figures, the focus of this report is on how UNMISS engages civilians.

As this report details, improved or more deliberate interaction with civilians will not necessarily translate into improved protection if the information and analysis generated by these practices are not part of UNMISS's information analysis and sharing systems, if early warning does not translate into early action, and if action between humanitarian and peacekeeping actors is not coordinated. Beyond implementing a community engagement strategy, UNMISS will need to address structural issues that prevent information from leading to action and ensure that staff understand the value of community engagement and have the training and appropriate skills to engage civilians in their own protection. The stakes are high in South Sudan. Despite the existence of a peace agreement signed in 2015, parties to the conflict continue to inflict extreme harm against civilians, and tensions tend to escalate into violence quickly.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To the government of South Sudan:

- Cease obstruction of UNMISS activities and movements and uphold the terms of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).
- Allow UNMISS to carry out community engagement activities outside of the Protection of Civilian (POC) sites without interference, including by convening meetings with civil society organizations and local non-governmental organizations.
- Cease harassment and arbitrary detention of civil society actors.

### To UNMISS:

- Continue to develop and then implement UNMISS's new community engagement strategy and develop a plan for monitoring the impact of the strategy once adopted. Consider the benefits of a two-tier strategy that provides broad guidance at the national level and specific plans of action at the field office level, outlining operational plans for achieving protection objectives through community engagement activities.
- Expand and systematize the use of important protection of civilians and community engagement tools such as conflict analysis and protection matrices. Create a process and timeline for regularly updating the information captured in these documents.
- Ensure that decisions on where to engage and who to engage are based on comprehensive conflict analysis, risk analysis, and "do no harm" principles.
- Shift more community engagement activities from one-off events to sustained and repeat engagements with key community members.
- Ensure that all staff members receive adequate in-country training on the South Sudanese context and conduct periodic scenario-based trainings that include key aspects of community engagement.
- Ensure that procedures for handover of contacts and projects from outgoing to incoming personnel are adhered to and allow adequate overlap between Mission personnel, including for civilian personnel and Force contingent commander rotations.
- Consider prioritizing resources to develop new engagement tools, which could include: a telephone

number, managed by someone who can speak local languages, for communication between South Sudanese stakeholders and UNMISS staff; civilian perception surveys; and offices within POC sites where civilians can report protection concerns.

- Alongside continued investment in training for community watch group (CWG) members, explore additional mechanisms for monitoring the volunteer groups and reducing CWG abuses in the POC sites.
- Conduct a thorough review of how community liaison assistants (CLAs) are utilized by the Mission, with recommendations on how they can best be managed and deployed. Develop a handbook specifically outlining the role of CLAs within UNMISS and put in place a more formal training program for them.
- Progressively build UNMISS's capacity to track and analyze information collected through community engagement to enable preventative deployment and action by UNMISS personnel.
- Encourage a higher degree of information sharing between Mission sections, particularly civilian and military sections, and establish guidelines or standards for sharing different types of reports across departments so that information obtained through community engagement can be used to make operational decisions.
- Increase use of strategic communications and two-way communication with civilians by building the capacity of the Public Information Office to perform these functions and by making greater use of existing two-way communication tools and forums, such as UNMISS radio programs, the Communicating with Communities Working Group, and Internews radiobroadcasts.
- Clarify information-sharing policies and procedures with humanitarians. Further, increase the opportunities for joint trainings between UNMISS and humanitarian staff to improve knowledge of each other's roles and responsibilities, which can contribute to coordination and collaboration of community engagement activities.

### To the United Nations Security Council and Member States:

- Welcome the development and implementation of a community engagement strategy and ensure that

the number of personnel approved in UNMISS's future mandates allows for the implementation of community engagement activities.

- Ensure that the capabilities supporting community engagement outlined in the mandate and the Mission's budget proposals, are fully funded.
- Allocate and approve funding that enables UNMISS to hire consultants with expertise in community engagement and South Sudan to support the development, implementation, and/or monitoring and evaluation of community engagement activities.
- Continue to make programmatic funding for UNMISS more flexible so that Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and other community engagement projects can be adjusted to meet changing community and conflict dynamics and so that, in coordination with humanitarians, they can be implemented in a timely manner to meet specific, identified needs.
- Make clear to the South Sudanese government that continued obstruction of UNMISS movement, in violation of the SOFA, will have consequences. Identify concrete remedial steps that can be taken in response to continued violation of the agreement.
- Request reporting on how UNMISS's community engagement activities are improving protection for civilians. This will encourage UNMISS to focus on the impact of activities rather than focusing only on the completion of community engagement tasks.

#### **To the United Nations Secretariat:**

- As part of ongoing efforts to improve Protection of Civilians (POC) training for peacekeeping personnel, include additional guidance for UN civilian and military officials on community engagement in UN-approved trainings.
- Improve and maintain a larger roster of community engagement experts that UNMISS and other UN missions could draw from. Ensure balanced participation of men and women in the roster.
- The UN Secretariat should assist in the development of a national-level community engagement strategy or guidance for UNMISS personnel on community engagement.
- The UN Secretariat should support UNMISS in developing improved public information materials that explain the Mission's mandate, protection activities, and community engagement initiatives.

- UNMISS personnel, in partnership with relevant UN Secretariat entities, should ensure that program criticality decisions, evacuation plans, and security procedures for staff strike a balance between protecting staff and allowing staff to engage with and protect civilians.

## METHODOLOGY

This report is based primarily on five weeks of field research undertaken between January and April 2017 in South Sudan by two CIVIC staff members. In-country research was conducted in Juba, Wau, Malakal, and Bor. The report also draws on in-person, phone, and Skype interviews conducted with UN and NGO stakeholders located in Rwanda, New York, and Washington D.C. between November 2016 and June 2017. The research and recommendations seek to build on previous research on this subject undertaken by the Stimson Center, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, the United Nations, and many other organizations.

In total, CIVIC interviewed 73 South Sudanese civilians (41 women and 32 men) and 12 members of South Sudanese civil society. CIVIC conducted 19 interviews with uniformed UNMISS personnel, 49 with civilian UNMISS officials, and 43 with representatives from the humanitarian community in South Sudan—some of which were repeat engagements with the same individuals over a period of time. Five diplomats and five additional country and subject matter experts were also consulted. Where time and security constraints prevented CIVIC staff members from speaking with civilian or civil society representatives outside of the UNMISS protection of civilians sites, CIVIC attempted to collect information on the situation and perspective of civilians outside of the sites through interviews with humanitarians operating in these areas.

Interviews were semi-structured. When the interviewee did not speak English, an interpreter from the same ethnic group provided translation. CIVIC sought a diverse sample of interviewees in terms of gender and age. Most civilian interviews were conducted individually, although some conversations were held in a group setting when this was the preference of the participants. CIVIC did not offer any monetary incentive to interviewees for speaking with our staff members, and all participants were given the option to end the interviews at any time.

CIVIC shared a draft of this report with UNMISS and received comprehensive feedback from the Mission. Many of their comments have been incorporated into this final version.

For the security and privacy of the people interviewed, CIVIC has withheld names and identifying information throughout the report. Occasionally, where the location of an interview might have identified individuals, the location has also been withheld.



*The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) handed over the keys to a solar-powered water system to local leaders during a handover ceremony in Juba on 29 June 2017. The water system was constructed under a Quick Impact Project (QIP). The partnership also resulted in the clearance of vegetation surrounding three communities around UN-House in Juba, thus providing greater security for the communities. June 29, 2017*

UN Photo/Amanda Voisard

## I. BACKGROUND

After several decades of armed struggle, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on July 9, 2011, but the country's government was built on a cracked foundation. South Sudan's president, Salva Kiir, was a longtime rival of the country's first vice president, Riek Machar. During South Sudan's drawn-out struggle for independence, Kiir and Machar led separate armed factions that were largely split along ethnic lines and that sometimes employed brutal tactics against each other and against civilians. Their power-sharing arrangement in the new government was therefore tenuous. Moreover, while the new country possessed significant oil reserves at independence, it had few paved roads and little in the way of industry or economic opportunity for citizens beyond subsistence farming, cattle herding, and military service.

As international actors were still touting South Sudan as a success story, its leadership began diverting wealth from oil revenues for personal profit. In part, they used this wealth to purchase weapons and to maintain the large army that was the legacy of the country's long struggle for independence. The space for free speech, freedom of the press, and public criticism of the government deteriorated quickly on the heels of independence.<sup>3</sup> Tensions mounted between Kiir, Machar, and their allies, particularly after Kiir dismissed Machar from his cabinet in July 2013 and Machar announced he would challenge Kiir for the presidency in the elections, then scheduled for 2015.

On December 15, 2013, fighting erupted in the nation's capital between South Sudanese security forces aligned with President Salva Kiir and factions supporting former Vice President Riek Machar.<sup>4</sup> The crisis, although rooted in a political power struggle, was quickly marred by violence against civilians along ethnic lines. Machar and his allies formed the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO), and violence spread from the capital to the Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile areas of the country.<sup>5</sup>

In August 2015, the parties signed the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), which marked a formal end to the civil war. The ARCSS called for the creation of a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) and brought Machar back to Juba as the First Vice President in the power-sharing government. However, the parties to the ARCSS stalled on implementing many of the agreement's provisions, and tensions between Kiir and Machar remained high.

In July 2016, violence erupted again in Juba between forces loyal to Kiir and those aligned with Machar, causing Machar to flee from the capital.<sup>6</sup> The renewed violence quickly spread to other areas of the country. During his flight from Juba to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Machar received support from opposition factions based in the Equatoria regions that aligned themselves with the SPLA-IO. Previously spared from conflict, this region was drawn into the violence. Since July 2016, the Equatorias have been the site of

3 Human Rights Watch (HRW), "South Sudan: Stop Harassing, Detaining Journalists," May 3, 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/03/south-sudan-stop-harassing-detaining-journalists>.

4 President Kiir removed Machar from the vice presidency on July 23, 2013. See African Union, *Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan Report* (AU COI), para. 63. There were soon rival narratives regarding the origins of the December 15 events, with the government asserting that Machar had launched a coup and the opposition alleging that the government had fabricated that threat to crack down on political rivals and Nuer civilians in Juba. The AU COI found that "the evidence does not point to a coup. We were led to conclude that the initial fighting within the Presidential Guard arose out of disagreement and confusion over the alleged order to disarm Nuer members. The Commission notes further, that there are also suggestions of a mutiny within the Presidential Guard, and the ensuing violence spiraled out of control, spilling out into the general population." African Union, *Commission of Inquiry Report*, para. 68.

5 See Daniel Howden, "South Sudan: the state that fell apart in a week," *The Guardian*, December 23, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/23/south-sudan-state-that-fell-apart-in-a-week>; United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), *Special Report: Attack on Bentiu, Unity State, 29 October 2014*, December 19, 2014; UNMISS, *Attacks on Civilians in Bentiu & Bor, April 2014*, January 9, 2015; UNMISS, *Flash Human Rights Report on the Escalation of Fighting in Greater Upper Nile*, April/May 2015, June 29, 2015; Human Rights Watch, "They Burned It All": *Destruction of Villages, Killings, and Sexual Violence in Unity State South Sudan*, July 2015. UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR), *Attacks on Civilians in Bentiu and Bor, April 2014*, January 9, 2015. Human Rights Watch, "South Sudan: Ethnic Targeting, Widespread Killings," January 16, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/16/south-sudanethnictargeting-widespread-killings>.

6 For a summary of how the violence affected civilians and UNMISS's response to the violence, see Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), *Under Fire: The July Violence in Juba and UN Response*, October 2016; UN OHCHR, *A Report on Violations and Abuses of International Human Rights Law and Violations of International Humanitarian Law in the Context of Fighting in Juba, South Sudan, July 2016*, January 2017.

brutal violence against civilians, which UN envoys have warned amounts to ethnic cleansing.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, government SPLA forces used the dry season between January and April 2017 to drive opposition forces out of strategic towns and areas in the Unity, Upper Nile, and Western Bahr el Ghazal regions of the country. As part of military campaigns to control land, government and opposition armed actors have launched targeted attacks against civilians assumed to be providing support to one side or another based on their ethnic affiliation. Attacks against civilians have led to unprecedented displacement both inside and outside of the country. As of September 2017, 1.87 million people were internally displaced and another 2 million have fled to neighboring countries.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the conflict, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has been a key protection and security actor. The UN Security Council (UNSC) authorized the deployment of UNMISS in July 2011 to support the consolidation of peace, the strengthening of the state, and the protection of civilians in the newly independent country.<sup>9</sup> In recognition of the deteriorating security situation and the outbreak of civil war, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2155 on May 27, 2014, which shifted the focus of UNMISS's mandate away from partnership with state authorities toward more neutral activities, including the protection of civilians, human rights monitoring, and enabling the delivery of humanitarian assistance.<sup>10</sup>

When conflict broke out in 2013, thousands of civilians sought shelter from violence at UNMISS bases. Settlements of displaced civilians in and around UN bases became formal POC sites in six locations. The number of civilians sheltering in these sites climbed to over 200,000 by mid-2015 and has hovered close to that number since. As of September 2017, UNMISS was providing protection to 214,426 civilians in POC sites.<sup>11</sup> POC sites are different from other “safe areas”

established by UN peacekeeping operations because they exist on land that the government, through the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), agreed the UN could use for its premises, personnel, and activities. Under the SOFA, UNMISS has a right to deny the entry of any actor, including the host-state government, onto its premises.<sup>12</sup> While this authority helps UNMISS protect POC residents from external threats, it creates major legal, logistical, and protection challenges for UNMISS within the sites, as UNMISS is able to detain suspects, but is not authorized to fully assume executive authority on rule of law issues. This means that UNMISS cannot subject detainees to trial or conviction when they are suspected or accused of having committed a crime.<sup>13</sup> Humanitarian and other actors have criticized UNMISS for focusing protection activities on POC sites at the expense of vulnerable communities and areas beyond its walls. POC sites also pose a number of unique challenges to UNMISS, which will be explored in this report.

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7 Statement by Yasmin Sooka, Chair of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan at the 26th Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council, December 14, 2016. For more on the violence in Central Equatoria, see UN OHCHR, *Human Rights Violations and Abuses in Yei, July 2016-January 2017*, May 2017; HRW, “Soldiers Assume We are Rebels”: *Escalating Violence and Abuses in South Sudan’s Equatorias*, August 2017.

8 UN Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 14: South Sudan*, September 8, 2017.

9 The UN Security Council authorized UNMISS on July 9, 2011, through UN Security Council Resolution 1996. Two UN peacekeeping operations preceded UNMISS. The UN Mission in Sudan was deployed in northern and southern Sudan in 2005 to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. UNMIS was replaced by UNMISS in 2011. The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei was deployed in June 2011 to monitor contested areas between Sudan and South Sudan and to protect civilians and humanitarian workers.

10 UN Security Council Resolution 2155, May 27, 2014, UN Doc. S/2014/158.

11 UNMISS, PoC Update, October 2, 2017.

12 *The Status of Forces Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan concerning the United Nations Mission in South Sudan*, August 8, 2011, [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmiss/documents/unmiss\\_sofa\\_08082011.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmiss/documents/unmiss_sofa_08082011.pdf).

13 For additional information on the challenges to instituting justice in the POC sites, see Justice Africa, *Justice Displaced: Field Notes on Criminality and Insecurity in South Sudan’s UN Protection of Civilian Sites*, 2016; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *Protection of Civilians: Lessons from South Sudan for Future Operations*, May 2017.



*Peacekeepers and UN Police Officers (UNPOL) with the UNMISS conduct a search of weapons and contraband in Protection of Civilians (POC) Site 3, near the Jebel area of Juba. July 19, 2016.*

UN Photo/Eric Kanalstein

## II. THE VALUE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Community engagement as a key tool for protection

Although each section of UNMISS engages with communities to carry out the Mission's protection of civilians mandate, up until recently there was a lack of strategic thinking and planning for community engagement, outreach, and communications driving UNMISS's work. In the absence of a community engagement strategy, UNMISS civilian, military, and police officials have had three sources of general guidance to direct their work, including their decisions around community engagement: the Mission's mandate, its concept of operations, and the results-based budget (RBB) frameworks. The first two broadly define which core Mission activities should be prioritized overall. The RBB, which is the annual peacekeeping budget plan, outlines Mission objectives, expected results, and how funding will be aligned with the mandated priorities and long-term goals of the peacekeeping operation. While these documents provide some overarching direction, the UNMISS Mission Concept is outdated<sup>14</sup> and the mandate and RBB frameworks do not provide operational guidance on how and where UNMISS should be conducting engagement activities.

Currently, UNMISS is developing a community engagement strategy that may serve to close this gap in operational guidance. Based on our research, it was clear to CIVIC that more strategic community engagement planning would be beneficial to help the Mission improve protection of civilians. Many UNMISS staff agreed with the need for a community engagement strategy<sup>15</sup> and recognized a number of potential benefits to putting one in place, including:

- helping UNMISS determine which engagement

activities are likely to contribute to UNMISS achieving its strategic protection objectives.<sup>16</sup> As an UNMISS civilian official said, "It is possible to do community engagement, we just need to define better what it is."<sup>17</sup> As the Text Box, *Defining Community Engagement in The Peacekeeping Context*, explains UNMISS personnel have thus far used a diverse set of definitions of community engagement and generally consider any interaction with civilians to be a form of engagement. In a context where UNMISS is asked to perform a wide variety of functions to address multiple types of conflict with limited funding, a community engagement strategy with priority activities will contribute to more efficient use of resources;<sup>18</sup>

- promoting higher-level and more effective coordination of engagement to avoid duplication of efforts, leverage the comparative engagement strengths of different sections, and improve the outcomes of engagement across UNMISS's operations.<sup>19</sup> With the absence of an engagement strategy in the past, as one interviewee noted, community engagement activities of different Mission sections have been, "taken as discrete tasks but they need to be coordinated;"<sup>20</sup>
- creating more continuity in UNMISS's activities. Some civil society leaders and civilians who spoke with CIVIC voiced frustration over inconsistency in UNMISS's engagement with them,<sup>21</sup> while humanitarian actors also noted that there is a tendency for UNMISS to decrease community engagement activities during relatively calm periods and employ them to address emergencies or improve the Mission's image following a crisis.<sup>22</sup> A

14 CIVIC was informed during the drafting of this report that an updated Mission Concept had been drafted and was under review at UN headquarters.

15 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #28, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #172, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #173, conducted via Skype, June 2017.

16 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #8, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #32, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS humanitarian official, #91, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #122, Juba, April 2017.

17 CIVIC interview with UN official, #6, Juba, January 2017.

18 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #8, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #32, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS humanitarian official, #91, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #122, Juba, April 2017.

19 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #30, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #41, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #42, Juba, February 2017.

20 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #112, Juba, April 2017.

21 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #11, conducted via Skype, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #15, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #86, Malakal, April 2017

22 CIVIC interview with UN official, #26, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #111, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #41, Juba, February 2017.

strategy could encourage planning that results in more consistent and proactive engagement, shifting the focus from reaction to prevention;

- ensuring that UNMISS's engagement activities "do no harm" by, for example, offering guidance on when certain activities are most appropriate in the South Sudan context or what protection concerns should be analyzed and steps taken to mitigate harm to civilians that could arise from engagement;
- supporting monitoring and evaluation on the protection value of engagement activities. Without a clear picture of what is most effective, community engagement activities can default to what is easy rather than what leads to impact;<sup>23</sup>
- and, if shared publicly, combatting perceptions from civilians and parties to the conflict that the Mission lacks neutrality and managing public expectations regarding what the Mission can and will do.<sup>24</sup>

## DEFINING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE PEACEKEEPING CONTEXT

Community engagement is not yet a concretely defined term in the context of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support (DPKO/DFS) has devoted resources to developing overarching and context-specific guidelines on community engagement for missions, which may help to clarify what activities are considered engagement. While these resources are still in draft form, the overarching practice note on community engagement references the HIPPO findings that community engagement should be part of all phases of a mission cycle, including assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The document also provides examples of how communities can be engaged in different core aspects of peacekeeping mandates such as situational reporting and analysis, support to political institutions and processes, restoration of state authority, protection of civilians, and managing inter-communal violence.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has defined community engagement as "a two-way dialogue between crisis affected communities, humanitarian organizations, and, where possible, within and between communities." According to OCHA it involves elements of "participation, feedback and complaints, and providing information" and should "enable affected people to meet their different needs, address their vulnerabilities, and build on their pre-existing capacities."<sup>25</sup> The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has also developed guidance on a community-based approach to protection work that is outlined as "a way of working with persons of concern during all stages" and that demands an understanding of "the political context, the receiving population, gender roles, community dynamics, and protection risks, concerns and priorities."<sup>26</sup>

UNMISS staff who spoke with CIVIC before a community engagement strategy was under development interpreted community engagement broadly to refer to all Mission interactions with civilians that are meant to provide information on protection concerns or that contribute to improved protection. This included patrols, community infrastructure projects, advocacy with local and national government officials, trainings on conflict and violence reduction, and inter-communal dialogues. UNMISS personnel sometimes categorized community engagement activities based on the stage of intervention (preventing, mitigating, or resolving conflict) and the goal of the activity, such as consultation, communicating a message, or empowering communities.<sup>27</sup> An UNMISS community engagement strategy should strive to incorporate aspects of the existing definitions in use by UN agencies and ensure operational clarity for UNMISS personnel around what constitutes community engagement.

As UNMISS drafts a community engagement strategy, it should consider these needs identified by internal and external stakeholders.

## Operationalizing the strategy

Operationalizing a strategy is often more difficult than developing it. In peacekeeping operations, strategies are regularly written but not implemented because they

23 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #22, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UN official, #26, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #30, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #93, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #79, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #111, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017.

24 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017.

25 OCHA, "OCHA on Message: Community Engagement," November 2015, [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OchaOnMessage\\_CommunityEngagement\\_Nov2015.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OchaOnMessage_CommunityEngagement_Nov2015.pdf).

26 UNHCR, *A Community Based Approach in UNHCR Operations*, January 1, 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/legal/47ed0e212/community-based-approach-unhcr-operations.html>.

27 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #122, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #126, Juba, April 2017.

become outdated quickly, constrain innovation, or add tasks to already overburdened staff without resulting in clear benefits. Such concerns have led to skepticism on the part of some UNMISS officials,<sup>28</sup> one of whom asked, “Do people really understand and rally behind a strategy? Is it guiding daily work, or instead [are they] thinking, ‘what is the situation and what are we going to do [in response to a crisis]?’”<sup>29</sup>

South Sudan’s conflict dynamics often change quickly, as do the South Sudanese government officials who are implementing policies. UNMISS’s community engagement strategy should be flexible enough to allow field offices to shift their programming if the conflict environment changes or consultations with the civilian population indicate programming is not relevant or desired. Speaking about the importance of having tools for community engagement that can be adapted to changing situations at the field level, one UNMISS official interviewed by CIVIC said, “We really appreciate that space...because it allows you to respond appropriately in every context and in the different contexts.”<sup>30</sup>

To allow for flexibility and relevance, UNMISS could consider a two-tiered strategy. The first tier, put in place at the national level, could provide overarching guidance, including the definition and objectives of community engagement in South Sudan, a portfolio of possible community engagement activities, mechanisms for coordinating activities between headquarters and the field, and a framework or requirements for monitoring and evaluating impact and incorporating lessons learned. The second tier would include area-specific guidance and planning developed by personnel at the field office level.<sup>31</sup>

Whether developed at the national or subnational level, strategic planning will need to be updated regularly. To be effective, the development of an engagement strategy should also be accompanied by scenario-based training for staff members that builds the skills required to implement the strategy and also builds a deeper understanding of the role of community engagement in promoting protection.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, UNMISS will need to determine how its community engagement strategy links to a Mission-wide protection

strategy, which UN headquarters has instructed it to adopt.

Externally, UNMISS will need to consider how its strategy is coordinated with the activities of humanitarian partners.<sup>33</sup> In South Sudan, high levels of insecurity and the need to deliver both physical protection and services in and outside the POC sites mean that humanitarians and peacekeepers work in close proximity. While many mechanisms exist to link humanitarians and UNMISS for information sharing and coordination, both UNMISS officials and humanitarians often note that the quality of these coordination meetings could be improved. A review of these coordination mechanisms is beyond the scope of this report, but could assist UNMISS and humanitarian actors as they implement community engagement activities. Efforts are currently under way to revise country-specific guidelines on coordination between humanitarians and UNMISS, which may clarify some of these issues. However, involving humanitarian and civil society organizations in the development and implementation of UNMISS’s community engagement plans could also ensure optimal coordination.

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28 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #30, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #65, Juba, April 2017.

29 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #65, Juba, April 2017.

30 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017.

31 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #42, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #65, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UN official, #126, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UN official, #127, Juba, April 2017.

32 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #11, conducted via Skype, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #41, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #58, Wau, February 2017.

33 UN, *DPKO/DFS Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping*.

### III. EXISTING EFFORTS TO ENGAGE CIVILIANS

All Mission components have some activities that involve interacting with South Sudanese actors. This section of the report provides an overview of why and how various Mission components engage with communities, with a particular emphasis on community liaison assistants (CLAs), language assistants, and the military component of the Mission. The section highlights some notable engagement practices that have been adopted by UNMISS despite the challenging operating environment. Recognizing the obstacles facing the Mission, CIVIC also offers suggestions for the Mission and the UN Secretariat to consider in order to strengthen community engagement while UNMISS is developing a community engagement strategy.

#### Engagement by UNMISS Force

UNMISS Force, the military component of the Mission, consists of military contingents or units, military liaison officers, and other individual staff officers deployed at the Force headquarters in Juba. Its special focus is on tasks such as planning, operations, civil-military relations, and information collection and analysis. Military contingents deployed to UNMISS are expected to secure the perimeter of POC sites and improve physical protection for civilians outside of the POC sites. These contingents have a presence in areas of South Sudan, such as Leer, where other Mission components are unable to go because of security concerns. In some ways, they are at the front lines of community engagement, particularly when they conduct patrols and implement community infrastructure and support projects, referred to as CIMIC projects.

The Force's principal method of engagement is through patrols, including long-distance and long-duration patrols as well as shorter-range patrols in towns, during which they can speak with civilians to collect information on the security situation. The Force also leads integrated patrols, which include military and civilian components of the Mission. During

integrated patrols, the Force provides security that allows Mission staff with a variety of engagement skills and objectives to reach civilians. Integrated patrols mobilize a considerable amount of Mission resources and are a frequently utilized tool across all field offices that UNMISS officials and humanitarians agreed are an important engagement tool for UNMISS. UNMISS troops also conduct frequent vehicle and dismounted patrols in a weapons-free zone around the Juba POC sites<sup>34</sup> and lead firewood patrols around most POC sites.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the importance of patrols for accessing civilians and collecting information on their perspectives,<sup>36</sup> the Force faces challenges carrying out patrols. For example, government actors often disrupt long-duration patrol plans by denying UNMISS officials access to the area of concern. Mission personnel also explained to CIVIC interviewers that while foot patrols, as opposed to vehicle patrols, are particularly important for community engagement because they allow more interaction with civilians, troops may not be properly trained for dismounted patrolling or be willing to take the security risks required to patrol on foot. Moreover, engagement with communities during Force patrols can have negative consequences—in some areas, civilians who interact with UNMISS may face reprisals.<sup>37</sup>

Another significant challenge is that many peacekeepers do not speak English. This makes substantive communication with civilians a difficult or impossible undertaking.<sup>38</sup> While UNMISS has some community language assistants, a capability which will be explored later in the report, they are limited in number and are sometimes underutilized because of operational or administrative constraints. In addition, they are not always deployed in adequate numbers to field locations, which seriously hampers the ability of uniformed personnel to interact substantively with civilians. In locations or situations where UNMISS troops do not have access to language assistants, they

34 Much of the July 2016 fighting between government and SPLA-IO Forces in Juba took place in close proximity to the POC sites, leading to civilian casualties. After the violence, UNMISS created a 200-meter weapons-free zone around the sites to improve protection for civilians inside the sites and to protect the civilian nature of the sites by preventing SPLA-IO fighters from hiding weapons near the camps. Grass was cleared to improve visibility in the area and frequent weapons searches are conducted in the zone.

35 CIVIC interview with UN official, #12, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #27, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UN official, #43, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #51, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #65, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #116, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #152, Bor, April 2017.

36 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #28, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #100, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #116, Juba, April 2017.

37 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #2, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #6, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017.

38 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #15, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #31, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #116, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017.

often find ad hoc ways of communicating with civilians, including by asking community members with English language skills to assist them in speaking with others. However, humanitarians raised concerns in CIVIC interviews that this method could create protection risks for civilians.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, Mission personnel may not be capable of meeting the full range of security concerns raised by civilians. Force also does not have the mandate nor the expertise and capabilities to provide humanitarian assistance and is discouraged from doing so in internationally recognized and South Sudan-specific guidance on civil-military relations in complex emergencies.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Force can only relay the needs to humanitarian actors, who may or may not be able to serve the area. Repeatedly surveying the security and humanitarian concerns of civilians can raise expectations of assistance and lead to frustration and disengagement by civilians when a situation does not improve.<sup>41</sup> Such a situation was explained to CIVIC by an UNMISS military official:

We get to these village[s] routinely or monthly. Some people get angry [and say]: “You ask the same questions, come here, and nothing changes.” If we keep going places and asking how security is and they say good but there are humanitarian issues... that’s where the UN will lose its support, asking a bunch of questions and then disappearing.<sup>42</sup>

### **PRESENCE AND ROLE OF FEMALE UNIFORMED PERSONNEL IN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS**

**Having female peacekeepers can give a mission additional advantages for engagement. Even for the same issue, female and male civilians may identify different root causes and solutions. Therefore,**

**accessing the distinctive information available from women and men is vital to crafting adequate protection solutions.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, some civilians may feel more comfortable sharing information with someone of their same sex. As an UNMISS military official explained to CIVIC, “The vast majority of MLOs [Military Liaison Officers] are blokes and therefore you can’t access half the population.”<sup>44</sup> Despite the importance of female uniformed personnel for engaging civilians, UNMISS, like most peacekeeping missions, has only a small number female soldiers and police officers. As of August 2017, 410 of UNMISS’s 12,241 troops and 234 of the 1,587 police personnel were female.<sup>45</sup>**

**Before withdrawing their troops in 2016, Kenya maintained an all-female contingent of peacekeepers in Wau. Normally, firewood patrols do not actually involve substantial interaction between peacekeepers and the women who exit the POC sites in search of firewood during these time periods. However, the all-female Kenyan battalion, rather than simply conducting vehicle or foot patrols during set times, actually accompanied women in search of firewood. The IDP women reportedly felt more comfortable with female peacekeepers, and these patrols were an opportunity for exchanging information.<sup>46</sup> To compensate for the lack of female peacekeepers deployed to South Sudan, female Formed Police Unit (FPU) officers sometimes accompany Force on patrols, and female community watch group (CWG)<sup>47</sup> members can also serve as important focal points for Force.<sup>48</sup>**

**In practice, this issue can be more complicated than simply having female military and police personnel deployed in country. Humanitarians occasionally complain that, although women are deployed within different contingents, they rarely see these women performing duties.<sup>49</sup> One UN police (UNPOL) officer noted that female UNMISS officers tend to be concentrated in Juba as opposed to field locations, and a female peacekeeper disclosed that many contingents impose different restrictions on female peacekeepers as opposed to male peacekeepers—**

39 CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #7, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #15, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC email correspondence with humanitarian, October 2017.

40 UN and Interagency Standing Committee, *Civil-Military Guidelines and References for Complex Emergencies*, 2008; OCHA, *Guidelines for the Coordination between Humanitarian Actors and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan*, December 6, 2013.

41 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #66, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #101, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017.

42 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017.

43 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #91, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #124, Juba, April 2017.

44 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017.

45 UN, *Summary of Troop Contributions to UN Peacekeeping Operations by Mission, Post, and Gender*, August 31, 2017.

46 CIVIC interview with UN official, #43, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #51, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #57, Wau, February 2017.

47 CWGs are groups of civilian volunteers within the POC sites who receive some training and equipment from UNMISS and with UN police officers to monitor and report on security issues.

48 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #15, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UN official, #43, Wau, February 2017.

49 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #15, Juba, January 2017.

including whether they participate in patrols or can enter POC sites<sup>50</sup> Ensuring that female peacekeepers and UNPOL officers contribute to community engagement will require not only that increased numbers of women deploy to peacekeeping missions, but that contingents allow them to perform a full range of functions.

In addition to patrolling, military personnel engage with civilians through different types of community projects, referred to as CIMIC projects. These CIMIC projects are funded by the governments of individual Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) and are separate from Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), which are funded from the Mission's core budget and generally carried out by national non-governmental and community-based organizations with oversight by UNMISS civilian officials from the Relief, Reintegration, and Protection (RRP) unit and Director of Mission Support for UNMISS. Both types of projects can foster goodwill with communities, and QIPs are carried out in close consultation with South Sudanese civilians, including through community led monitoring of project implementation. Examples of projects include temporary medical and veterinary service delivery, repairing schools, and building bridges. UN OCHA, which facilitates communication and coordination between the humanitarian community and Mission, often provides input to help prevent Mission QIPs from duplicating humanitarian activities or undermining distinction between peacekeepers and humanitarians. TCC-funded projects have much less oversight by Mission personnel and humanitarian actors.

The Republic of Korea Heavy Mechanized Engineering Company (ROKHMEC) in Bor has demonstrated that TCCs can deliver high-quality, conflict sensitive, and consistent community projects. ROKHMEC manages a project that brings civilians from different ethnic communities together for vocational training in carpentry, baking, or agriculture. The products produced during the trainings are donated or sold in a bakery and market set up by the battalion. The contingent also uses its engineering equipment for construction and road repairs. The Government of the Republic of Korea has invested significant resources in these projects, and they are carefully turned over from one contingent to another.<sup>51</sup>

ROKHMEC's approach appears to escape many of the pitfalls of some TCC projects by avoiding duplicating the activities of humanitarian organizations, leveraging the TCC's added value of access to engineering equipment, and taking into consideration how to sustain activities rather than undertaking one-off investments that raise the expectations of communities without the backing of sustainable resources.

Other positive examples of TCC projects exist as well, but UNMISS has limited engineering assets, and TCCs have to balance the use of these assets for community projects with other Mission priorities. Also, because there is little oversight of these projects, humanitarians are critical of them. Humanitarians raised concerns during CIVIC interviews that TCC projects blur distinctions between humanitarians and peacekeepers, are not conflict sensitive, are not based on proper assessments of the needs and vulnerabilities of communities, and should only be undertaken in areas where humanitarians are unable to provide necessary services.<sup>52</sup> The concerns raised by humanitarians are important. A civil society leader illustrated the importance of these issues when he said,

[Peacekeepers] have cleared bushes around school compounds with communities. In other areas they are building roads but not with the community, so people are looking at them as government contractors. They don't explain or talk to the community about who they are or why they are doing the projects.<sup>53</sup>

UNMISS officials interviewed by CIVIC who were involved in the planning and implementation of CIMIC projects seemed to be aware of the concerns of humanitarians and the importance of involving communities in selecting projects.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, UNMISS officials recognized the benefits of thinking more strategically about how QIPs and CIMIC projects are carried out to maximize the involvement of communities in the projects and the quality of interactions between UNMISS and communities during project implementation.<sup>55</sup>

50 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #124, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #50, Wau, February 2017.

51 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #152, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #153, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #178, Bor, April 2017.

52 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #8, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #29, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017.

53 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017.

54 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #57, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #66, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #90, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #100, Malakal, April 2017.

55 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #66, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #90, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #111, Juba, April 2017.

In addition to the challenges that peacekeepers face while carrying out patrols and community projects, outlined above, UNMISS military personnel are also often on shorter rotations than most of their civilian counterparts. Contingent and individual military officer assignments to the Mission usually range from six to twelve months, although some individual military officers and higher-ranking positions may be longer. The short duration of rotations can mean that by the time military personnel understand the context in some depth and begin building community relationships, they are required to leave.

While military peacekeepers have tools for community engagement, with the exception of military liaison officers (MLOs) who are specifically intended to interact with communities, most troops are not trained for community engagement and may not always be the best-placed actors to engage civilians.<sup>56</sup> MLOs are expected to establish and maintain contact with host nation military forces and other parties to the conflict. They are also tasked with “outreach and engagement with civilian organizations, local population, humanitarian and development actors.”<sup>57</sup> However they make up less than 200 of the currently deployed uniformed personnel and they experience some of the same challenges to engagement as military contingents, such as the government blocking their movement and activities.

Finally, UNMISS troops wear uniforms and carry weapons. These uniforms are important to signal the role of peacekeeping troops as security actors and distinguish them from humanitarian and NGO actors. However, in a context where many civilians have witnessed atrocities committed by uniformed soldiers, these items may undermine trust and create barriers to engagement.

Despite these challenges, it is vital for peacekeepers to engage communities as they carry out protection activities, and several civil society leaders argued that because civilians may have experienced violence at the hands of soldiers in the past, it is all the more important that UNMISS’s uniformed personnel interact

positively with communities to distinguish themselves from abusive armed actors.<sup>58</sup>

In order to ensure that patrols are as effective as possible, UNMISS should prioritize dismounted and integrated patrolling when possible and also ensure that troops are properly trained on how to conduct dismounted patrols. While UNMISS will not be able to overcome all access issues, it can continue to direct troops to push back against access blockages. Greater awareness of the community context can also allow UNMISS to conduct patrols at strategic times when engagement will be most useful, such as when community-level meetings and events are taking place that could provide key opportunities for engagement or increase civilian vulnerabilities.<sup>59</sup> Before engaging, UNMISS should assess the risks to civilians and ensure civilians understand that engagement is voluntary. Training specifically on community engagement that includes a component of managing civilian’s expectations and ensuring that engagement “does no harm” would also be valuable.

To ensure that information collected during Force patrols is relayed to humanitarians, UNMISS may need to review coordination mechanisms and ensure that the right individuals at the national and field office levels are attending joint meetings. Among other mechanisms, UNMISS’s leadership meets with UN OCHA officials through an Operation Coordination Committee, UN OCHA participates in patrol planning meetings, and some humanitarians are present in UNMISS Joint Operations Center meetings (see Section VI). However, several UNMISS military officials and humanitarians suggested that improved information sharing and coordination is needed.<sup>60</sup> Communication with humanitarian actors could also increase opportunities for humanitarian actors to advise the Force against CIMIC projects that could raise protection concerns or have unintended negative consequences.

To ensure continuity, contingent commanders should hand over community contacts and projects to their successors.<sup>61</sup> In order to reduce communication barriers

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56 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #8, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #66, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #79, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #137, conducted via Skype, February 2017.

57 United Nations, *UN Force Headquarters Handbook*, November 2014, 42

58 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #15, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #133, Juba, February 2017.

59 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #15, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #124, Juba, April 2017.

60 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #8, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #13, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #57, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #101, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017.

61 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #95, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #137, conducted via Skype, February 2017.

between troops and civilians, UNMISS could redeploy existing language assistants to field locations where they are inadequately staffed; ensure that troops understand the different roles of language assistants and community liaison assistants (CLAs), a topic which will be explored later in the report; and issue a directive for patrolling contingents to include Mission personnel with English language capabilities.

Training on community engagement should also be assessed and improved. As DPKO reviews and updates their military training requirements and training modules on protection of civilians, they should include guidance and standards on interaction with civilians. More attention to these issues should be included in TCC pre-deployment training and during in-theater training. Some of the training should be specific to the South Sudanese context and cover activities such as conducting dismounted patrols, the role of the Force versus the Mission's civilian components and humanitarians, identifying and mitigating harm that could occur through engagement, and how to interact with vulnerable, conflict-affected populations, including individuals that may be victims of abuse.<sup>62</sup>

### United Nations Police (UNPOL)

More than soldiers, police officers are generally expected to work closely with communities to address insecurity and to de-escalate tensions. UNMISS UNPOL has units that are specifically dedicated to community policing, gender, and child protection.<sup>63</sup> Inside the POC sites, they attend community meetings and, when incidents take place, they follow up directly with community members to understand and resolve problems. Outside the POC sites, UNPOL conduct a limited number of patrols to communities near UN bases and train and build the capacity of the South Sudan National Police Service. UNPOL officers also contribute to community engagement through their participation in integrated patrols alongside Force and other UNMISS sections.

For civilians living in the POC sites, UNPOL is the most visible and accessible component of UNMISS, and many civilians interviewed praised their work.<sup>64</sup> A youth committee member in the Juba POC site said, "UNPOL are here throughout the day and night, helping people. We appreciate them... They have informed us that if anything is affecting people, we can report it. Communication [between IDPs and UNPOL] is 24 hours each day."<sup>65</sup>

As POC sites have grown in number and size, unique opportunities and challenges have arisen for engagement. One example is the community watch groups (CWGs), which UNMISS established in the POC sites. Despite a strong presence in the POC sites, UNPOL officers cannot provide constant security in all areas of the sites. CWGs were designed to fill this gap. Group members are voluntary, but UNMISS personnel and non-governmental organizations provide some training and equipment to CWG members, like boots and flashlights, while UNPOL oversees the activities of the groups. Overall, civilians who spoke with CIVIC inside the Juba, Bor, and Malakal POC sites supported CWGs and felt that they contributed positively to security.<sup>66</sup>

UNMISS views the role of CWGs primarily as an intermediary with the community, providing UNMISS information on protection concerns and POC dynamics, as well as referring security incidents to UNPOL.<sup>67</sup> At times, CWGs can overstep the boundaries set by UNPOL, taking action on their own rather than referring cases back to UNPOL. UNPOL is investigating accusations that CWG members in one location created secret detention facilities in the POC site where they held IDPs.<sup>68</sup> Most civilians in the POC sites do not have direct contact with UNPOL and report issues first to the CWGs, which gives the CWG members more authority than UNMISS envisioned in deciding which cases to handle independently and which to refer to UNPOL.<sup>69</sup>

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62 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #11, conducted via Skype, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #36, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017.

63 CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #89, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #172, Juba, January 2017.

64 CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #7, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #39, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #105, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #107, Juba, April 2017.

65 CIVIC interview with civilian, #19, Juba, January 2017.

66 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #88, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #94, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #102, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #105, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #108, Juba, April 2017.

67 CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #123, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #90, Malakal, April 2017.

68 CIVIC observation of a security meeting between UNMISS and POC site leaders, #92, location withheld, April 2017.

69 CIVIC interview with civilian, #38, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #39, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #71, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #106, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #107, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #108, Juba, April 2017.

CWGs are also frequently accused of using violence and corporal punishment to resolve incidents,<sup>70</sup> and CIVIC was told they also sometimes “tax” POC site residents or charge fees for reporting issues to UNPOL.<sup>71</sup> In the words of one Juba POC site resident, “You can find some of these people just embarrassing, torturing, and beating women...They have that power and are the ones that are moving at night, so they use that power. Women are so concerned about that.”<sup>72</sup> In comparison to Bor and Wau, abuse appears to be particularly acute in the Juba POC sites, where a vigilante group known as N4 has sprung up in response to perceived security threats.

UNPOL is aware of the potential protection concerns that the CWGs pose to civilians and have tried to address these issues through regular training.<sup>73</sup> In Bentiu POC site, which is the largest site in the country, UNMISS also assigned CWG members to specific blocks to create a greater sense of accountability and allow CWG members to build relationships with block leaders and residents.<sup>74</sup> UNMISS could potentially consider applying this model in other locations. Additionally, UNMISS could establish more direct channels of incident reporting between civilians and Mission personnel, partner with POC residents or NGOs to undertake more systematic monitoring of CWG behavior, and take a larger role in selecting CWG members. These steps, along with continued training, will not resolve the issue entirely, but might reduce the potential for CWG abuses.

## Civil Affairs

The primary focus of Civil Affairs, consistent with the Mission’s vision of protecting civilians and building durable peace, is supporting subnational stakeholders in inter-communal conflict management, social cohesion, and reconciliation activities. They perform a broad range of activities such as consultations, trainings, workshops, and dialogues aimed at reducing inter-communal conflict, promoting reconciliation, and building social cohesion. These activities involve engaging with community leaders and members, host state authorities, and civil society organizations. The majority of Civil Affairs activities are focused outside of

the POC sites or on bridging divides between the POC site residents and communities outside the POC sites. While the Relief, Reintegration, and Protection (RRP) division of UNMISS takes the lead on administering the POC sites, Civil Affairs does work on resolving communal conflict within the sites, including by building the capacity of POC site leaders to resolve conflict inside the sites.

One community engagement tool deployed by Civil Affairs outside of POC sites warrants particular attention: inter-communal violence reduction between agricultural and pastoralist communities. Violence between agricultural and pastoralist communities is cyclical in South Sudan. It is driven by seasonal changes that cause cattle-herders to migrate into farming areas in search of food and water for their livestock. Because these conflicts are cyclical, UNMISS can predict the outbreak of agro-pastoral violence and, in partnership with NGOs, preemptively organize meetings and conferences with agricultural and pastoralist communities. The purpose of the conferences is to create a forum where community leaders can agree on migration routes and timing. UNMISS has also tried to encourage agricultural and pastoralist communities to outline penalties for breaking the arrangement and systems for monitoring and enforcing the agreements.<sup>75</sup>

Such agreements are not always effective. UNMISS has learned that sensitization of agricultural and pastoralist communities on the agreements and follow-up are vital to success. While UNMISS is a key actor in these conferences, often providing logistical support and legitimacy to the process, they lack the funds and flexibility to respond quickly reconvene community leaders quickly or access areas of the country when disputes between agricultural and pastoralist communities arise, UNMISS officials in the Malakal field office have tried to empower South Sudanese focal points to identify issues or early warning signs that an agreement is breaking down and determine which community members will be focal points for handling issues.<sup>76</sup>

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70 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #27, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #34, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #105, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #107, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #127, Juba, February 2017.

71 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #27, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #106, Juba, April 2017.

72 CIVIC interview with civilian, #34, Juba, April 2017.

73 CIVIC interview with civilian, #18, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #50, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #89, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #123, Juba, April 2017

74 CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #7, Juba, January 2017.

75 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #25, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #30, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #76, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #151, Bor, April 2017.

76 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #77, Malakal, April 2017.

The Civil Affairs personnel undertaking agro-pastoralist conferences and other programs possess a wide range of skills and experience. While they are often the personnel within UNMISS most prepared to handle inter-communal violence, humanitarians and UNMISS staff interviewed by CIVIC nevertheless recognized that even Civil Affairs staff could benefit from additional training on the South Sudanese context. Consultants are an important tool that increases the Mission's level of community engagement and anthropological expertise, but Mission components need to have access to adequate funds to commission them. In the long term, UN headquarters needs to recruit and train a larger roster of community engagement experts that UNMISS and other UN missions could draw from. As UNMISS develops more strategic community engagement plans, it will also be important for Civil Affairs to strengthen their consultation and coordination with humanitarian counterparts, particularly those who focus on protection. Finally, Civil Affairs initiatives should also be grounded in detailed and regularly updated conflict analysis to ensure that they do not exacerbate risks or otherwise cause harm to individuals and communities.<sup>77</sup>

### Relief, Reintegration, and Protection

UNMISS's Relief, Reintegration, and Protection (RRP) section is UNMISS's focal point for administering the POC sites and for coordinating with humanitarians. In particular, RRP works with humanitarian actors to identify durable solutions for displacement and look for opportunities to increase the resilience of returnees. RRP also interfaces with the South Sudanese government's Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, manages QIPs, and supports the individual who simultaneously acts as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator, and Humanitarian Coordinator. Each of these roles involves interacting with South Sudanese stakeholders. Some of the activities that might fall to a Civil Affairs unit in other countries are managed by RRP when they take place in the context of a POC site. For example, RRP has organized meetings between different communities within a single POC site to help them resolve conflicts.<sup>78</sup>

Notably, RRP's work overlaps to a degree with that of

Civil Affairs staff. For example, both RRP and Civil Affairs staff described themselves as playing a key role in resolving community disputes inside the POC sites and in liaising with South Sudanese stakeholders outside of the POC sites to resolve community issues preventing POC site residents from returning to their homes. Because of this overlap and because both are working on building bridges between POC site residents and civilians living outside these sites, a community engagement strategy could be an opportunity to clarify how the two sections could coordinate and collaborate to effectively engage with civilians.

### Human Rights Division

The Human Rights Division (HRD) interacts with civilians and government authorities to monitor and document human rights violations, undertake advocacy, and conduct trainings. Because of the sensitive nature of many violations, UNMISS's human rights officers have to build trust with communities in order access information. They do this, in part, by presence and repeated interaction with civilians inside and outside of the POC sites. Relationships have to be maintained during calm periods so that they can be accessed as security situations deteriorate.<sup>79</sup> In one example from the Upper Nile region, an UNMISS official explained that HRD personnel visited areas outside of the POC site repeatedly even though there were no immediate security threats. When fighting broke out unexpectedly in Wau Shilluk in January 2017, Human Rights Officers were in touch with contacts from the area that they had built over time and were able to receive updates on the situation as it escalated.

Ultimately, engagement between civilians and human rights staff is most critical where and when violations are taking place. However, program criticality regulations, which require human rights staff to be evacuated in times of serious crisis, and UN Department of Safety and Security regulations on civilian staff movement can prevent human rights staff from being where they are most needed to engage civilians. UNMISS and UN headquarters, in consultation with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, need to make sure that these regulations strike a balance between protecting staff and allowing staff to protect civilians.<sup>80</sup>

77 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #2, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #3, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #6, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #77, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #122, Juba, April 2017.

78 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #29, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #125, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #153, Bor, April 2017.

79 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #55, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #95, Malakal, April 2017.

80 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #28, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #57, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #111, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017.

## Public Information Office

The Public Information Office (PIO) of UNMISS is primarily focused on community outreach. The unit uses different types of media to disseminate messages of peace to communities and explain the Mission's mandate and protection activities to civilians. PIO teams often include staff trained in photography or radio broadcasting. Radio Miraya, the UNMISS radio channel broadcast in major towns across the country, is managed under PIO. South Sudanese government officials and other parties to the conflict routinely accuse the Mission, some of its contingents, and UNMISS officials of being partial to one party or another. These allegations, which are sometimes inflammatory and unsubstantiated, can incite protests against UNMISS and undermine the safety and security of Mission personnel and those they protect. It can also undermine civilian confidence in UNMISS and hamper the Mission's ability to achieve mandated objectives. PIO helps document UNMISS successes, which can counter negative propaganda against the mission and foster goodwill for the Mission among local communities.

However, many humanitarian actors interviewed by CIVIC felt that the work of PIO focuses too strongly on publicizing UNMISS activities. In their view, PIO could play a larger role in two-way information sharing with civilians.<sup>81</sup> A civil society leader observed that, "The culture of the Mission, they are very good in publicity. If [there is a small] meeting that they have attended, they are good at taking photos and tweeting...even a billboard is public relations, not information."<sup>82</sup>

UN peacekeeping missions tend to have hierarchical structures that require questions and issues to be escalated to Mission leadership rather than being dealt with in the field.<sup>83</sup> PIO staff may not be empowered to respond to questions posed by communities, and may also not have the necessary understanding of the Mission's mandate to do so. For example, in conversations with CIVIC, several PIO staff discussed messages they share with communities that CIVIC researchers believe inaccurately describe the Mission's mandate. As one staff said in reference to a failure to protect civilians that occurred in 2016, "[A] Chapter VII [mandate] was not in place at that time, and shoot to kill is still not in place."<sup>84</sup>

UNMISS could take steps to refocus the work of PIO from publicity and messaging toward two-way communication and information sharing with civilians. For example, UNMISS could empower field-based PIO staff to respond to questions and concerns from local communities by ensuring that they have a detailed understanding of the Mission's mandate. Additionally, UNMISS leadership and relevant personnel at UN Headquarters could develop more materials to assist PIO officers in describing the Mission's protection role and activities to civilians.<sup>85</sup> Strategic communications plans, developed as part of UNMISS's community engagement strategy and carried out by PIO, could also prioritize two-way information sharing activities.

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81 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #41, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #129, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #137, conducted via Skype, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017

82 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017.

83 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #44, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #129, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #137, conducted via Skype, February 2017.

84 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #75, location withheld, April 2017.

85 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #75, location withheld, April 2017.

## Community Liaison Assistants and Language Assistants

In 2010, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) created the role of community liaison assistants (CLAs) as a tool to link the Mission to communities and to increase its situational awareness. While language assistants are utilized by UNMISS for interpretation, CLA job descriptions include a much more extensive role. CLAs provide other UNMISS personnel with information and analysis on the South Sudanese context, build contacts in local communities, and deliver programming alongside UNMISS international staff. Since 2010, CLAs have also been deployed alongside peacekeeping personnel in the Central African Republic, Mali, and South Sudan. A UN survey of practice on CLAs noted that they generally perform a range of functions, including sensitization and dissemination of mission messages, building relationships and confidence between communities and the mission, organizing meetings, gathering information for analysis and early warning, and strengthening the capacity of local communities and organizations to respond to protection threats.<sup>86</sup>

While CLAs are not yet performing all of these functions for UNMISS, many UNMISS staff reflected positively on the increased capabilities that CLAs provide to the Mission. Personnel noted that CLAs allow the Mission to gain the trust of communities and understand the context in greater detail than international staff.<sup>87</sup> Others said that CLAs allow the Mission to collect information from a wider range of civilians—particularly in the POC sites—that feeds into early warning.<sup>88</sup>

### FOCUS ON CLAS: HOW HAS THE DECISION TO PLACE CLAS UNDER HEADS OF FIELD OFFICES AFFECTED THEIR USE?

Within UNMISS, CLAs are managed and deployed in a way that is significantly different from other missions. In other peacekeeping missions where CLAs are utilized, they are managed by the Civil

Affairs Division and many are deployed in company operating bases (COBs) alongside military personnel. In UNMISS, however, CLAs report to Heads of Field Offices, who lead subnational-level offices and manage all UNMISS civilian components in their area of operation. The CLAs also have a less direct working relationship with military personnel. It is important for peacekeeping actors to analyze and understand how this organizational structure has positively and negatively affected the value that CLAs can bring to the Mission.

Although having CLAs under the Heads of Field Offices means, in theory, that they are equally available to all military and civilian components of the Mission, in practice it may lead to the under-utilization of CLAs. Where CLAs are not assigned to particular departments, the process for requesting their assistance is somewhat lengthy and burdensome—in some locations requests have to be made 72 hours in advance.<sup>89</sup> One UN official told CIVIC, “I asked the military if they have access to the CLAs. They don’t feel like they do, because it is such a cumbersome process to go through the Head of Field Office or [the CLAs] are already tasked.”<sup>90</sup> CLAs confirmed that being located under the Head of Field Office contributes to underuse of their time and skills in some cases. One CLA relayed, “When we were with Civil Affairs we were busy. Now there is a gap. You could be two or three days without doing anything. ...It would be better if CLAs could be every day on the ground.”<sup>91</sup> In some field offices, CLAs may receive information on a possible protection concern, but have no way to independently investigate the issues without a request being made for them to do so by a particular unit.<sup>92</sup>

Complications have also arisen from having CLAs shared across the Mission. CLAs may struggle to understand the work and requirements of all of the different sections.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, CLAs believe that important information is at risk of being overlooked under the current system because, while out on a Mission with one section, they often observe or hear information that might be relevant to another section but have no clear system for reporting it. According to one CLA, “People might be reporting some issue related to Civil Affairs, Human Rights, or Gender. In this case, as a CLA, you are submitting [a report] only to [one department]. How will the other units come to

86 UN DPKO-DFS/DPET/Policy and Best Practices Service, *Community Liaison Assistants in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Survey of Practice*, November 2016, 8.

87 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #47, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #90, Malakal, April 2017.

88 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #91, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #119, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017.

89 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017.

90 CIVIC interview with UN official, #118, Juba, April 2017.

91 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #53, location withheld, February 2017.

92 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #45, location withheld, February 2017.

93 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #47, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #45, location withheld, February 2017.

know that an issue related to their area of response was there?”<sup>94</sup> CLAs do submit regular reports to supervisors, but these reports generally only outline what activities they have completed and do not include information on protection concerns.

With the current organizational structure, daily management of CLAs has also been a challenge. Heads of Field Offices do not have time to manage or support CLAs directly.<sup>95</sup> To solve this issue, Heads of Field Offices have tasked different staff members with acting as the first line of reporting and management—including political affairs officers and POC advisors. Other field offices have assigned CLAs to work with and report to particular units.

If these challenges are addressed, having CLAs located under UNMISS’s Heads of Field Offices could have some benefits. As CLAs noted in interviews with CIVIC, they have the opportunity to learn more by working with a variety of different Mission components.<sup>96</sup> Heads of Field Offices also play a key role in planning and managing resources, making them an ideal person to task CLAs as needed and as part of coordinated planning.<sup>97</sup> Under Heads of Field Offices, CLAs are also more able to feed information into and contribute to operational planning.<sup>98</sup>

In a conflict that is highly politicized along ethnic lines, there are limitations to how CLAs can be utilized. UNMISS CLAs, language assistants, and other national staff have been threatened, attacked, and detained by parties to the conflict in the course of performing their duties. It is often not safe for them to move in areas controlled by an armed group affiliated with an ethnic group different from their own.<sup>99</sup> UNMISS patrols have been denied

movement by armed groups based on the ethnicity of national staff participating in the patrol.<sup>100</sup> In some locations, CLAs have resorted to living inside UN bases because of threats they face outside of the bases.<sup>101</sup> UNMISS personnel also frequently noted to CIVIC that they felt information collected by CLAs was subject to bias and therefore had to be verified by other sources.<sup>102</sup>

Within UNMISS, the function of CLAs overlaps to a degree with that of language assistants and other national staff. This has led to significant confusion amongst UNMISS personnel about the role of CLAs. Many UNMISS personnel—including senior military and civilian officials—referred to CLAs and language assistants interchangeably or acknowledged being unable to distinguish between the two categories.<sup>103</sup> Confusion is compounded by the fact that, in some bases, CLAs and language assistants share office space. They are also categorized within the same pay grade, and CLAs are too frequently employed solely for interpretation.<sup>104</sup> Some personnel from substantive sections deeply involved in community engagement concluded that they do not need CLAs because they have national staff, such as human rights officers and civil affairs officers, who collect information from South Sudanese civilians.<sup>105</sup> Confusion over the role of CLAs likely contributes to their under-utilization by some components of the Mission. In particular, CLAs appear to be more widely used by civilian personnel than UNPOL and Force.<sup>106</sup> As one CLA stated, “The uniformed component, up to now we have never gotten any request, but we are meant to support all units.”<sup>107</sup>

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94 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #45, location withheld, February 2017.

95 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #58, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #91, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017.

96 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #96, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #97, Malakal, April 2017.

97 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #13, Juba, January 2017.

98 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #119, Juba, April 2017.

99 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #97, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #111, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017.

100 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #100, Malakal, April 2017.

101 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #53, location withheld, February 2017.

102 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #36, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #90, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #119, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #172, Juba, January 2017.

103 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #57, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #89, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #111, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #90, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017.

104 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #30, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #91, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017.

105 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #79, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017.

106 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #45, location withheld, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #53, location withheld, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #79, Malakal, April 2017.

107 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #45, location withheld, February 2017.

# UNMISS should prioritize dismounted and integrated patrolling when possible and ensure troops are properly trained on how to conduct dismounted patrols.

CLAs are also sometimes not provided with adequate resources—such as telecommunications equipment and a budget for transportation—to perform their activities.<sup>108</sup> In the words of one CLA, “We are supposed to be going out and [being the] eyes of the Mission in communities,” but the lack of resources “leaves the Mission blind.”<sup>109</sup> Additionally, there is no standardized training for CLAs that outlines their role or builds key skills. CLAs reported receiving either no training or only a basic training introducing them to the principles and functioning of the United Nations.<sup>110</sup>

Finally, UNMISS civilian and military personnel expressed frustration in their comments to CIVIC regarding the inability of the Mission to flexibly hire

CLAs and language assistants with the right skill set—including considerations of ethnicity, language abilities, sex, and prior experience.<sup>111</sup> In particular, many UNMISS officials felt that their ability to engage with civilians was seriously hampered by the lack of female CLAs and had repeatedly but unsuccessfully requested that hiring female CLAs be prioritized.<sup>112</sup> In some locations, the effective use of language assistants is also hampered by administrative complications that restrict the working hours of language assistants to standard weekday hours even though most security incidents within the POC sites occur in the evenings.<sup>113</sup> An UNPOL official explained, “We are using them Monday to Friday but policing is always 24/7 and 365. Maybe that just gets lost [in human resources].”<sup>114</sup>

108 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #96, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #97, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #119, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UN official, #118, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017.

109 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #53, location withheld, February 2017.

110 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #45, location withheld, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #53, location withheld, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #96, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #97, Malakal, April 2017.

111 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #28, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #53, location withheld, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #91, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #100, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #119, Juba, April 2017.

112 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #53, location withheld, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #91, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017.

113 CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #7, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #123, Juba, April 2017.

114 CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #123, Juba, April 2017.

The use of CLAs is still relatively new within UNMISS and a variety of practices for the management and functioning of CLAs and language assistants exist throughout the country. An internal review of different CLA practices in South Sudan could be valuable as UNMISS develops a community engagement strategy. This review could include determining whether CLAs should remain under Heads of Field Offices and be a shared resource or be assigned to particular sections. Once UNMISS determines more concretely how CLAs should function, UNMISS leadership, with assistance from DPKO/DFS officials, should consider creating a handbook to guide UNMISS personnel, including CLAs, on their roles and capabilities. If CLAs remain a shared resource across sections, processes for requesting them and for sharing the information they obtain in the field should be clarified and simplified in the handbook. Some UNMISS personnel have created draft guidelines to provide a framework for interactions with and use of CLAs.<sup>115</sup> These could be useful in the development of a handbook.

After clarifying how the Mission can best utilize CLAs, UNMISS should also invest in improving CLA training, request the necessary resources to enable CLAs to carry out their duties, and ensure that management structures are in place to support CLAs. UNMISS may also benefit from reviewing its recruitment and CLA hiring practices to ensure that it is hiring the right people to effectively engage all members of society where UNMISS operates.

Other Missions with CLAs, particularly MONUSCO, have faced many of the concerns that are arising with the use of CLAs in South Sudan.<sup>116</sup> UNMISS should look for lessons learned and guidance from the experience of these other missions. Ultimately, UNMISS will not be able to overcome all of the challenges that CLAs face—such as access issues driven by the increasingly ethnic nature of violence in South Sudan. However, CLAs have proven a vital tool for community engagement in other contexts and UNMISS could invest in CLAs to develop them into a more effective community engagement tool.

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<sup>115</sup> CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #111, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #116, Juba, April 2017.

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, MONUSCO, CLA Best Practice Review, August 1, 2014.



## IV. CHOOSING WHERE TO ENGAGE

UNMISS faces a daunting range of protection threats across a vast territory. As UNMISS begins to think more strategically about community engagement, it will need to ask the question: where should the Mission be engaging? Answering this question will help UNMISS formulate effective community engagement strategies at the national and field office levels. This section reviews some of the challenges UNMISS faces in identifying where, when, and how to engage communities to improve protection of civilians.

### Engaging in areas affected by crisis versus expanding stable spheres

UNMISS works in a volatile environment where there are often more crises than can be immediately addressed given the Mission's limited resources and personnel. This creates a tendency for the Mission to focus on crisis areas—moving resources and attention to areas where tensions are rising, where a situation is deteriorating significantly, or where a crisis has broken out. To some extent, prioritizing resources to mitigate or interrupt violent conflict is necessary and vital. Failures to respond to emerging and escalating violence will leave civilians unprotected and damage South Sudanese and international confidence in the Mission. However, shifting resources to address flashpoints of violence can prioritize reactive responses over prevention and lead to inconsistent engagement with civilians. Some UNMISS personnel, humanitarians, and civilians observed that the Mission should strategically consider the division of resources it concentrates in crisis areas versus relatively stable areas of the country.<sup>117</sup>

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**LEFT** *An upsurge in violence beginning April 10, 2017 displaced thousands of people in South Sudan's Wau town. Between April 10 and 12, approximately 4,000 people arrived at the protection of civilians (PoC) site adjacent to the UNMISS base, joining more than 25,200 internally displaced persons (IDPs) already seeking refuge in the site. New arrivals at the PoC area have access to water and put up basic structures for shelter.*

UN Photo/Niktarios Markogiannis

One UNMISS civilian official noted that working in crisis areas was like “mopping the floor when the tap is still open,”<sup>118</sup> and that energy and resources would be exhausted in this way with fewer results. In that official's opinion, when UNMISS officials neglect to engage in areas of relative calm, it leaves a gap that allows stability and community relations to deteriorate. In other words, engagement is needed to “keep relatively stable areas stable.”<sup>119</sup> Other officials similarly noted that it could be more effective for the Mission to identify areas where co-existence between ethnic communities has a foundation and to work within and expand those areas.<sup>120</sup>

Different types of community engagement activities may be more appropriate in highly insecure areas versus relatively stable areas. UNMISS should be engaging in both areas in different ways. For example, UNMISS may need to focus primarily on collecting information on protection threats and violations in areas affected by ongoing violence, while it could focus on dialogue activities that help prevent an outbreak of or a relapse into violence in areas with inter-communal tensions. In stable areas, it can, in partnership with humanitarian and development actors, prioritize activities that build rule of law and governance capacity.<sup>121</sup>

While UNMISS personnel may be making these types of calculations on an individual basis, UNMISS could, through its engagement strategy, more deliberately identify objectives in locations affected by different levels and types of violence and craft interventions accordingly. Such deliberate planning could ensure that activities focused on longer-term stabilization are sustained even as crises arise in new areas and, if based on thorough conflict analysis, could also help UNMISS avoid moving ahead with activities that endanger civilians. As part of strategic planning on where to intervene, UNMISS could also consider whether to devote more resources to mitigating violence that is likely to escalate into national-level conflict versus violence likely to remain localized.<sup>122</sup>

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117 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #8, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #28, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #45, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #68, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #111, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #122, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #125, Juba, April 2017

118 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #125, Juba, April 2017.

119 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #125, Juba, April 2017.

120 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #28, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #111, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #122, Juba, April 2017.

121 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #122, Juba, April 2017.

122 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #68, Juba, April 2017. For additional information on prioritizing different types of local-level conflicts, see Stimson Center, *Local Conflict Local Peacekeeping*, <https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/PCIC-LocalConflict-FINAL-WEB.pdf>.

## Engaging inside POC sites

As previously discussed, UNMISS has used its Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to deny any actor entry to UN bases and the adjacent POC sites. UNMISS exercises this right to deny access to the POC sites to all parties to the conflict, including the government, that may pose a threat to POC site residents. While denying entry of armed parties helps UNMISS protect POC sites from external threats, it creates a number of protection challenges for UNMISS within the sites. The UN Security Council has not given UNMISS an executive mandate to exercise the functions of the host-state government, such as enforcing the rule of law. Without adequate capabilities or legal clarity, UNMISS has had to develop alternative approaches to providing protection, including detaining or denying entry to people accused of criminal acts. Effective community engagement by UNMISS is a key aspect of providing safety and security within the POC sites in the absence of government presence.

In order to fill political and rule of law gaps within the POC sites, residents have reinstated traditional legal systems and developed leadership structures, civil society organizations, and youth movements. In addition to community watch groups (CWGs), each POC site has elected leaders that govern the entire site as well as leaders who handle minor issues within site sections, referred to as zones or blocks. Leadership structures vary from camp to camp, but generally each POC site has a chairman and chairlady as well as deputies and secretaries. In some POC sites, youth committees have an official status, while in other sites they operate on the margins of the official structure. In most POC sites there are coordination meetings that bring together the POC site leadership, international and national NGOs working in the POC sites, and UNMISS representatives from UNPOL and RRP. Coordination meetings are an opportunity to discuss protection and service delivery issues within the sites. A wider range of UNMISS officials also typically host security meetings with POC leaders.

POC site leaders interviewed by CIVIC gave little indication that they had a clear picture of UNMISS's various sections and responsibilities.<sup>123</sup> Despite a

lack of clarity about the range of Mission actors and activities, most POC site leaders and block leaders who spoke with CIVIC explained that they had strong access to personnel within some sections of the Mission, and that this access often resulted in a Mission response. One POC site chairman described specific examples where he had brought issues to UNPOL that had been resolved,<sup>124</sup> and a deputy POC chairman stated, "When we talk, we do see something improve."<sup>125</sup> Other interviewees complained that UNMISS officials generally control the security meeting agendas and discussions and may prioritize issues important to the Mission rather than those important to the POC site leadership.<sup>126</sup> A local NGO worker observed:

We have the PSC [Peace and Security Council], we have youth leaders, we have community leaders. The communication is there. They come to sit together, but they are not able to listen. The PSC will say that there is this, this, and this and we want to solve it, but [UNMISS] won't listen.<sup>127</sup>

Despite established systems of communication, CIVIC interviews revealed a lack of consensus between UNMISS personnel and POC site residents about the responsibilities of POC site leadership. As with the CWGs, POC site leaders tended to view the scope of their authority in broader terms than did UNMISS officials. One chairman described holding a meeting in which civilians in the POC site discussed an attack on several POC residents and whether they should respond with deadly violence against the attackers. The chairman also said that he and other POC site residents "discuss the security situation alone [and] have meetings alone. If there is fighting between two people or a man and a woman, a small number wounded or a pregnant woman, we [handle] it alone."<sup>128</sup> Echoing this sentiment, a female block leader in a Juba POC site stated, "Whenever there is a problem, we sit down and settle it ourselves. When it is very big, we call UNPOL and they take it to [UNMISS Headquarters]."<sup>129</sup> A deputy chairman noted that if he and other POC site leaders determine that the situation is insecure outside the POC site, they will use the CWG to prevent residents from leaving the site.<sup>130</sup> Some POC residents and leaders expressed that UNMISS's most important role should be to protect POC site residents

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123 CIVIC interview with civilian, #34, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #40, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #60, Juba, February 2017.

124 CIVIC interview with civilian, #70, Juba, April 2017.

125 CIVIC interview with civilian, #141, Juba, April 2017.

126 CIVIC observation of UNMISS security meeting with POC leaders, #92, location withheld, April 2017.

127 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #99, Malakal, April 2017.

128 CIVIC interview with civilian, #70, Juba, April 2017.

129 CIVIC interview with civilian, #107, Juba, April 2017.

130 CIVIC interview with civilian, #141, Juba, April 2017.

from outside threats, as opposed to resolving security issues in the camps.<sup>131</sup>

Informal Mediation and Dispute Resolution Mechanisms and community courts also function inside the POC sites and are subject to the same tensions.<sup>132</sup> UNMISS expects that the courts will handle only minor civil issues; in reality, however, they sometimes take on more serious issues, such as rape, and dole out corporal punishment. Moreover, UNMISS does not always have a supervisory role or clear understanding of their activities.<sup>133</sup> Recognizing these issues, UNMISS and NGOs in charge of camp management have negotiated Terms of Reference (TORs) to clearly outline the role of POC site leaders, CWGs, and community courts.<sup>134</sup> These agreements have the potential to resolve some tensions, but without real acceptance from the POC site leaders, they may have limited impact and can also bring their own complications. For example, a chairman frustrated by the content of a TOR stated, “They were saying the Peace and Security Council will not handle these affairs...We are still treated as a child with UNMISS.”<sup>135</sup>

UNMISS leadership should monitor the effectiveness of TORs in different locations, review whether TORs are being applied consistently, and look for good practices from field offices in how these TORs have been negotiated or implemented. While imperfect, TORs may generate some important discussion and agreement among UNMISS, NGO camp managers, and POC site leaders on the respective roles and responsibilities of each party, as well as how they will share information around protection concerns. UNMISS officials responsible for organizing or attending coordination and security meetings should ensure

that POC site residents play a role in shaping meeting agendas. Where time is not adequate within current meetings to address civilian concerns, additional meetings or working groups may need to be held to resolve issues identified by POC community members. In partnership with NGOs operating inside the POC sites, UNMISS should strive to ensure that communities have mechanisms in place for dispute resolution that are both acceptable to the communities and in line with human rights principles.

### Engaging outside of the POC sites

With 214,426 people living inside the POC sites as of September 2017 and 1.87 million internally displaced across the country, POC site residents make up less than 11 per cent of the total internally displaced population and less than 2 per cent of the country's total population.<sup>136</sup> Yet UNMISS focuses many of its resources on protecting the POC sites. External stakeholders have criticized UNMISS's lack of presence and response to protection threats outside of POC sites for many years<sup>137</sup> and humanitarian actors remain concerned about UNMISS's heavy focus on protection inside versus outside of the POC sites.<sup>138</sup>

Some civilians interviewed by CIVIC were also critical of UNMISS's balance of community engagement activities.<sup>139</sup> Several young men living outside the POC site in Bor felt marginalized by UNMISS's lack of engagement. For them, this drove feelings of resentment and accusations that the Mission was not neutral.<sup>140</sup> One male youth leader told CIVIC that, “For UNMISS to win back our trust, they need to come together with the chiefs, youth, and women. They should help with our roads and women education

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131 CIVIC interview with civilian, #70, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #71, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #83, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #127, Juba, February 2017.

132 While there are important differences between IMDRMs and community courts, CIVIC's research indicated that UNMISS staff often referred to and treated these structures interchangeably, and it is unclear whether a clear difference between these two functions exists in any POC site. The same conclusion was drawn by NRC in their report, *Protection of Civilians: Lessons from South Sudan for Future Operations*.

133 CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #7, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #18, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #50, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #86, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC email correspondence with humanitarian actor, October 2017.

134 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #76, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #84, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC observation of UNMISS security meeting with POC leaders, #92, location withheld, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #143, Malakal, April 2017.

135 CIVIC interview with civilian, #84, Malakal, April 2017.

136 OCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 14: South Sudan*; UNMISS, PoC Update.

137 CIVIC, *Within and Beyond the Gates: The Protection of Civilians by the UN Mission in South Sudan*, 2015; International Organization for Migration (IOM), *If We Leave We are Killed: Lessons Learned from South Sudan Protection of Civilians Sites 2013-2016*, 2016; NRC, *Protection of Civilians: Lessons from South Sudan for Future Operation*.

138 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #15, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #32, Juba, January 2017.

139 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #154, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #155, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #156, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #157, Bor, April 2017.

140 CIVIC interview with civilian, #155, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #156, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #157, Bor, April 2017.

and sport[s]. These things can help create unity and promote their mandate.”<sup>141</sup> Some humanitarian workers, while acknowledging the resource constraints of the Mission, felt that UNMISS does not engage outside of the POC sites primarily because it is more difficult to do so and because the Mission does not yet fully understand how to systematically engage communities outside of POC sites.<sup>142</sup>

UNMISS faces a number of challenges to increasing its engagement outside POC sites, including that it lacks a physical presence throughout the country. Before South Sudan’s civil war, UNMISS maintained a larger network of county support bases (CSBs), but it has closed many of them due to resource constraints and security concerns.<sup>143</sup> The creation of the POC sites has also placed a strain on Mission resources. An UNMISS military official observed that, “We can work outside the POC [sites] in some areas, but as the sites grow, too many resources are flowing [into the sites] and we don’t have the capacity to do it outside.”<sup>144</sup> An UNMISS civilian official illustrated the choices facing the Mission by asking, “Do you defend POC sites or go out on patrols?”<sup>145</sup>

In addition to resource constraints, UNMISS is facing other serious challenges to engaging with civilians outside of POC sites. As covered in the section on Force patrolling, UNMISS is often blocked from traveling by air and road to areas where violence is ongoing.<sup>146</sup> The government also sometimes objects to the Mission conducting engagement activities outside of POC sites.<sup>147</sup> According to one UNMISS civilian official, “The government will say UNMISS’s role is only in the POC [sites], not in the host community.”<sup>148</sup> Because the government is a party to the conflict,

UNMISS also risks placing civilians in harm’s way when it involves them in activities or collects information from them;<sup>149</sup> engagement outside of the POC sites often has to be “on government terms.”<sup>150</sup>

In conversations with CIVIC, UNMISS personnel recognized that it is important for them to increase their presence and activities outside of the POC sites to provide protection to a larger number of civilians and create an environment that is safe for displaced people to begin returning home.<sup>151</sup> According to UNMISS personnel, this is a priority for UNMISS’s new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, David Shearer, and he has issued a number of statements emphasizing the need to increase protection outside POC sites.<sup>152</sup>

UNMISS should continue increasing the level of activities and community engagement initiatives that it conducts outside of the POC sites through long and short-duration integrated patrols, as well as through integrated community outreach tools such as focus group discussions and engagement with key leadership figures to promote longer-term protection solutions. It should make decisions on where and how to engage outside of the sites based on thorough assessments of protection and community needs. Alongside these efforts, UNMISS should maintain awareness of the perceptions that arise from its balance of engagement activities and use strategic communication with civilians outside of the POC sites to promote greater understanding of its limitations and its role versus the roles of other actors, such as the government, humanitarian workers, and development organizations.

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141 CIVIC interview with civilian, #155, Bor, April 2017.

142 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #15, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #26, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #32, Juba, January 2017.

143 CIVIC interview with civilian, #154, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #170, Bor, April 2017; UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Community Liaison Assistants in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, 2017

144 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #28, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #172, Juba, January 2017.

145 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #28, Juba, January 2017.

146 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #3, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #5, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #13, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #42, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #90, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #144, Malakal, April 2017.

147 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #76, Malakal, April 2017.

148 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017.

149 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #66, Juba, April 2017.

150 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #5, Juba, January 2017.

151 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #91, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #116, Juba, April 2017.

152 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #65, Juba, April 2017; Daniel Dickinson, “Return Home from UN Protection Sites Aided by Humanitarian and Peacekeeping Support,” UNMISS, September 6, 2017, <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/return-home-un-protection-sites-aided-humanitarian-and-peacekeeping-support>; David Shearer, “Address to Security Council,” September 26, 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/david-shearer-special-representative-south-sudan-and-head-united-nations-mission>.

## Building a bridge between POC sites and towns

Parties to South Sudan's civil war have routinely targeted civilians along ethnic lines, as ethnicity is assumed to be an indicator of an individual's political affiliation. Dinka communities are presumed to support the government and SPLA, while most Nuer clans and, increasingly, other minority ethnic groups are assumed to support opposition groups. When the SPLA and SPLA-IO gain or regain control of towns, they often enact reprisals against ethnic groups affiliated with their opponent. In anticipation or response to this violence, civilians have sought shelter in the POC sites. This dynamic has led to stark ethnic and political divides between civilians living inside and outside the POC sites in most locations. Inter-communal grievances and tensions, alongside fear of attack from armed groups, make POC site residents reluctant to return to their homes.<sup>153</sup>

In order to begin bridging the divide between civilians living inside the POC sites and those living outside, UNMISS, in partnership with some NGOs, has begun leading inter-communal meetings and dialogues between the two populations. These activities have the potential to reduce ethnic tensions and create an environment in which IDPs feel increasingly safe to voluntarily leave the POC sites, although in some cases they may not have a home to return to.<sup>154</sup> They may also identify key barriers to return. For example, in Malakal and Juba, initial conversations with communities revealed that one major concern blocking dialogue and reintegration is the occupation of IDP homes. Having identified this barrier, UNMISS officials are trying to address it.<sup>155</sup>

Many civilians, humanitarians, and Mission personnel interviewed by CIVIC felt that inter-communal dialogue to build links between civilians living inside and outside of POC sites should be an important component of UNMISS's community engagement work. An UNMISS

official described the need for such dialogue in Juba, reporting, "There is such a gap in understanding, even between moderate Dinka [outside the POC sites] and people in the POC [sites]. Community engagement must address the gap in understanding, bringing people together. Keeping communities isolated increases risks."<sup>156</sup> Similarly, an UNMISS civilian official observed that "people living isolated like they do creates a rumor mill, sometimes not anchored in reality, or anchored in reality but spun and spun and spun."<sup>157</sup>

Although some civilians viewed inter-communal dialogues as helpful,<sup>158</sup> others felt that dialogues would fail or could exacerbate tensions.<sup>159</sup> In the words of one POC site chairlady, "The people in town abuse us. Why do [UNMISS staff] want us to meet with these people who beat us?"<sup>160</sup> One youth leader from outside the POC sites told CIVIC, "It is hard for there to be dialogue, to bring people together when the guns are not silent in South Sudan."<sup>161</sup> A second youth leader agreed, saying, "UNMISS is trying to organize workshops [between communities] but people live in fear, so they will not go."<sup>162</sup> A female civilian living in the Malakal POC site voiced a preference that UNMISS prioritize engagement with the government and armed actors in the area over facilitating inter-communal dialogue, as tensions were still quite high. She said, "[UNMISS] come[s] and tell us, 'let us make peace.' Us IDPs, we don't have a problem [with peace]. Let them start with the army and those who are armed."<sup>163</sup> Such concerns do not mean that UNMISS should abandon attempts at inter-communal dialogue. Rather, they may demonstrate the extent to which dialogue is needed to overcome communal barriers. However, UNMISS needs to proceed with caution.

Some UNMISS personnel and INGO stakeholders also raised concerns that inter-communal dialogues between populations inside and outside the POC site are moving forward too quickly and could therefore have the unintended consequence of placing

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153 CIVIC interview with civilian, #34, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #37, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #94, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #167, Bor, April 2017. See also, Danish Refugee Council, Congestion in the Malakal Protection of Civilian Site, South Sudan, March 2017.

154 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #152, Bor, April 2017.

155 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #79, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #94, Malakal, April 2017.

156 CIVIC interview with UN official, #117, Juba, April 2017.

157 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #79, Malakal, April 2017.

158 CIVIC interview with civilian, #19, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #136, Juba, February 2016; CIVIC interview with civilian, #155, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #144, Malakal, April 2017.

159 CIVIC interview with civilian, #71, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #83, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #84, Malakal, April 2017.

160 CIVIC interview with civilian, #163, Bor, April 2017.

161 CIVIC interview with civilian, #157, Bor, April 2017.

162 CIVIC interview with civilian, #167, Bor, April 2017.

163 CIVIC interview with civilian, #94, Malakal, April 2017.

communities at greater risk of inter-ethnic violence.<sup>164</sup> A number of humanitarian and NGO employees suggested that significant work on trauma healing needs to precede inter-communal dialogue.<sup>165</sup> Many UNMISS personnel responsible for leading inter-communal dialogues were cognizant of these concerns and are moving forward with their activities cautiously, for example, by continuing to work with communities in isolation until the community expresses willingness to begin a conversation across ethnic lines.<sup>166</sup>

As with other decisions around where to engage, strategic community engagement planning can ensure that UNMISS systematically conducts risk assessments and takes steps to mitigate risk before beginning inter-communal dialogue. UNMISS may also need to revise or lengthen project timelines, be prepared to invest significant resources in separate dialogues with communities before bringing them together, and identify interim activities that can build confidence and support for inter-communal dialogue. For example, one POC site chairman who was staunchly opposed to inter-communal dialogue requested training from UNMISS on conflict reduction and transformation.<sup>167</sup> This request demonstrates that there are activities UNMISS can carry out to build toward reconciliation even where inter-communal dialogue may be inappropriate.

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164 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #24, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #32, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #68, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #93, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UN official, #117, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #125, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #172, Juba, January 2017.

165 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #24, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #61, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #93, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #95, Malakal, April 2017.

166 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #6, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #66, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #152, Bor, April 2017.

167 CIVIC interview with civilian, #84, Malakal, April 2017.



*A group of children walk on the road, as a UN convoy is arriving to Rejaf, outside Juba, on October 24, 2015. The UN agencies, such UNICEF, WHO and WFP, among others, conducted today an inter-agency operation in the village to address medical concerns and commemorate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations.*

Albert Gonzalez Farran

## V. DECIDING WHO TO ENGAGE

Just as peacekeepers cannot engage everywhere, they do not have the resources or capacity to engage everyone. As UNMISS personnel develop and implement a community engagement strategy, they will need to identify the priority interlocutors who will give the Mission a holistic view of protection concerns and who will be key partners enabling the success of peacekeeping initiatives. UNMISS will also need to ensure that its own engagement does not reinforce inequalities and societal marginalization, which can themselves drive conflict.<sup>168</sup>

### Women

Middle-aged and elder males often dominate POC site leadership structures, which can lead to a lack of understanding and a de-prioritization of the protection concerns expressed by or affecting women, youth, and children.<sup>169</sup> Outside of the POC sites, men also largely occupy positions in the public sphere, including national and local government positions. Women's participation in identifying protection threats and responses is particularly important given that women are often able to cross boundaries between communities in South Sudan that men cannot, as armed groups heavily target and kill men because they are suspected of being armed group members.<sup>170</sup> UNMISS officials, humanitarians, and civil society leaders noted that women, because they can move more freely than men, may witness violations men are unaware of, maintain relations with individuals from other ethnic groups, and act as channels of information for their communities.<sup>171</sup> In the words of a civil society leader,

“Women are an entry point for community work.”<sup>172</sup>

UNPOL officers do attend meetings where women discuss protection concerns.<sup>173</sup> In several locations, moreover, UNMISS's Civil Affairs Officers, Human Rights Officers, and Gender Advisors have established regular forums for discussion with women to compensate for their lack of representation in other leadership structures.<sup>174</sup> However, in many of our consultations, humanitarian actors and civilians stressed the need for UNMISS and NGOs to find additional opportunities for engaging women. In one specific case, CIVIC found that the female leadership inside the Juba POC sites are being left out of security meetings that UNMISS hosts with other POC site leaders.<sup>175</sup> In Bor, Wau, and Malakal, female POC site leaders were included in security meetings that CIVIC attended, although the female leaders in Bor and Malakal did not speak English, and translation for them was ad hoc.<sup>176</sup>

One Juba POC site chairlady explained the situation by saying: “We, the women, are not being prioritized in those security meetings...UNMISS come here and just tell the men and the chairman. We are not being informed...Maybe they are tired of translations. We know only Arabic, we don't know English.”<sup>177</sup> A female deputy zonal leader in one of Juba's POC sites also complained about not being included in the security meetings and emphasized the importance of including female leaders, stating, “Zonal leaders who are women are always the ones who are resolving these issues...There are a lot of issues that women are suffering in the camp that men do

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168 See, for example, Dyan Mazurana, Angela Raven-Roberts, and Jane Parpart, *Gender, Conflict, and Peacekeeping* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

169 For example, in Malakal POC site, the 41-member Peace and Security Council has only 12 female representatives (CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #76, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #88, Malakal, April 2017). In Bor, of the 14 block leaders who attend meetings, one is a woman (CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #153, Bor, April 2017). In Juba's POC3, all but two block leaders are male. Additional women serve as deputy block leaders (CIVIC interview with civilian, #34, Juba, January 2017).

170 Women in South Sudan have been targeted with sexual violence on a wide scale in South Sudan. Despite being targeted with sexual violence, women still venture out of the POC sites in larger numbers than men.

171 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #5, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #78, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #81, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #84, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #145, Juba, April 2017.

172 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017.

173 CIVIC interview with civilian, #71, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #88, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #95, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #116, Juba, April 2017.

174 CIVIC interview with civilian, #71, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #88, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #95, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #116, Juba, April 2017.

175 CIVIC interview with civilian, #34, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #40, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #43, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #127, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #142, Juba, April 2017.

176 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #43, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC observation of UNMISS security meeting with POC leaders, #158, location withheld, April 2017; CIVIC observation of UNMISS security meeting with POC leaders, #92, location withheld, April 2017; CIVIC observation of UNMISS security meeting with POC leaders, #176, location withheld, February 2017.

177 CIVIC interview with civilian, #34, Juba, January 2017.

not know about, so we should be included.”<sup>178</sup>

Given their valuable knowledge of protection concerns and their direct role in dispute resolution, UNMISS should guarantee that female POC site leaders, including zonal and deputy zonal leaders, are incorporated into security and other protection related meetings. More than just being present, UNMISS should create the conditions for them to participate substantively in conversations. This may require overcoming barriers to women’s participation, such as language abilities and potential biases of male community leaders. As recommended in other sections of this report, UNMISS should also prioritize increasing the number of female officials serving in the Mission, including the number of female CLAs and language assistants. TCCs should not impose restrictions on female uniformed personnel, which prevent them from deploying to field locations or engaging with South Sudanese civilians.

## Youth

While men dominate South Sudanese leadership structures inside and outside the POC sites, male elders often retain positions of societal authority while youth are excluded from decision-making forums.<sup>179</sup> In several POC sites, this societal structure has been replicated.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, international actors sometimes view male youths as problematic instigators of violence and therefore exclude them from activities, exacerbating their lack of representation in protection and peace initiatives.<sup>181</sup> Decades of conflict have left youth with few options in terms of education and employment, but with ample experience of witnessing violence. NGOs that have surveyed youth perspectives have found that they have a high acceptance of violence as a method for handling some threats, and that male youths are often mobilized by their communities to respond to threats with violence.<sup>182</sup>

As with women, UNMISS has established youth committees and special projects to engage male youth in some locations. However, these may be insufficient. In the Malakal POC site, male youths have created a committee that is not officially recognized.<sup>183</sup> A leader of this committee told CIVIC, “We need the UN and NGOs to give empowerment to youth...They need to give youth a share in decision-making. Youth don’t need to hear...rumors, they need to hear directly.”<sup>184</sup> A need for greater youth inclusion was one issue raised by the Bor POC site chairman as well.<sup>185</sup> Male youths living outside of the POC site in Bor accused UNMISS of sidelining them because they were assumed to be aligned with the government.<sup>186</sup> One of these young men said, “UNMISS has not called on us, the youth, to explain their mandate. This has never happened since they came here. We were expecting UNMISS to do this, to speak with us, the youth, but they have not.”<sup>187</sup>

UNMISS and humanitarians should take steps to understand the perspective of youths in and outside POC sites, whether and when youths are drivers of conflict, and when they are leading or have the potential to lead peace initiatives. Youths should be engaged in projects. An assessment and analysis of their role in the community could help guide how to engage them in activities aimed at preventing, mitigating, or resolving conflict.<sup>188</sup>

## Civil Society

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are an important partner for the Mission. UNMISS has limited resources to engage directly with civilians, and civil society organizations are in contact with men and women in areas of South Sudan where UNMISS may not have a strong presence.<sup>189</sup> Therefore, CSOs provide UNMISS with information on the perspectives and protection concerns of civilians. CSOs are also a source of knowledge on the local context, including local

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178 CIVIC interview with civilian, #40, Juba, February 2017.

179 International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Displaced Youth’s Role in Sustainable Return: Lessons from South Sudan*, 2013; United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), *Children and Youth Consultation Report*, 2011; United Nations Development Programme, *A View on the Crisis in South Sudan*, April 27, 2014.

180 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #5, Juba, January 2017.

181 Search for Common Ground (SFCG), *Baseline Assessment Communicating for Peace in South Sudan: A Social and Behavior Change Communication Initiative*, April 2015; UNICEF, *Final Report: Youth Led Participatory Action Research*, August 2015.

182 SFCG, *Baseline Assessment Communicating for Peace in South Sudan*; Mercy Corps, *Youth at the Crossroads: Pursuing a Positive Path in South Sudan*, 2014.

183 CIVIC interview with civilian, #83, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #102, Malakal, April 2017.

184 CIVIC interview with civilian, #83, Malakal, April 2017.

185 CIVIC interview with civilian, #159, Bor, April 2017.

186 CIVIC interview with civilian, #155, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #156, Bor, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #157, Bor, April 2017.

187 CIVIC interview with civilian, #156, Bor, April 2017.

188 CIVIC interview with humanitarian, #82, CIVIC interview with civilian, #83, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #102, Malakal, April 2017.

189 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #48, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #52, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #55, Wau, February 2017.

# 🗨️ Different types of community engagement activities may be more appropriate in highly insecure areas versus relatively stable areas.

mechanisms for resolving conflict.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, CSOs in South Sudan have become adept at communicating messages on dialogue and peace in a way that is acceptable to possible spoilers, like parties to the current conflict.<sup>191</sup> Finally, UNMISS will not remain in South Sudan indefinitely, and collaboration between the Mission and CSOs can reinforce the capacity of local organizations to do protection work in addition to connecting and amplifying the voices of civilians.<sup>192</sup>

While there are clear benefits to UNMISS engaging with CSOs, there are also obstacles to collaboration. The government has monitored CSO meetings and targeted CSO leaders with detention and violence, causing many South Sudanese CSO members to flee to neighboring countries.<sup>193</sup> Because the government has targeted many CSO members, those who remain harbor deep suspicion against each other. In interviews with CIVIC, UNMISS and humanitarian workers also questioned the neutrality of local non-governmental

actors.<sup>194</sup> Under these circumstances, it is difficult for UNMISS to know whether local partners are perceived as legitimate by communities<sup>195</sup> and whether to engage regularly and substantively with them.

Some CSO leaders complained to CIVIC interviewers about the inconsistency of engagement and the transactional nature of their relationship with the Mission.<sup>196</sup> For example, one civil society leader stated, “If they feel like it’s a time for us to go and verify information or check something, they call us...but meeting to discuss issues or know how we are feeling is absent.”<sup>197</sup> However, in Wau, UNMISS officials appear to have maintained a close and trusted relationship with civil society leaders despite the restrictive security environment. CSOs described a concerted effort by Mission personnel to speak with them regularly, rather than only when the Mission needed to verify information.<sup>198</sup> Describing her interaction with the Mission, a female civil society leader stated, “They are

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190 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #48, Wau, February 2017.

191 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #136, Juba, February 2017.

192 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #48, Wau, February 2017.

193 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #2, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #11, conducted via Skype, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #22, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #30, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #33, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #48, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017.

194 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #3, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #22, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #45, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #174, Washington DC, April 2017.

195 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #3, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #22, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #45, Wau, February 2017.

196 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #24, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #48, Wau, February 2017.

197 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #35, Juba, January 2017.

198 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #45, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #48, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #52, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #55, Wau, February 2017.

accessible to us. Any time you want to meet you can just give them a call.”<sup>199</sup> UNMISS staff members in Wau have also taken steps to reduce harm to CSO leaders that could arise from engagement by conducting in-person visits to CSO offices when meetings and telephone calls are deemed unsafe.<sup>200</sup>

Although UNMISS’s options for interacting with CSOs are limited by the current restrictive environment, Mission personnel in Wau are demonstrating that it is possible to engage effectively. Even within the current environment, UNMISS can consult with CSOs, ensure that CSOs know how to report violations to key Mission personnel,<sup>201</sup> establish more regular engagement with CSOs when doing so would not endanger them, and explore the possibility of expanding the base of their interactions to local organizations outside of traditional civil society space that are involved in delivering community-level assistance.<sup>202</sup> The Mission should consider whether and how to replicate practices from Wau to other locations. Community engagement strategies at the field office level could take different approaches depending on the context-specific opportunities and threats in the region; they could outline the level and methods of civil society engagement deemed appropriate by each field office.

### Broader segments of the civilian population

UNMISS often interacts with societal leaders rather than members of the general population. There are few avenues for civilians inside and outside the POC sites to communicate directly with the Mission. The absence of direct communication between the Mission and the general population is due in part to UNMISS’s limited resources and in part to a reliance on communicating information through local leaders who act as focal points for the wider community.<sup>203</sup>

Outreach to broader segments of the population is important because civilians often have unrealistic expectations of what a peacekeeping Mission can accomplish or provide in terms of protection. At a minimum, unmet expectations can negatively impact perceptions of the Mission and undermine the Mission’s ability to undertake ongoing protection activities. In crisis situations, unrealistic expectations can put civilians at risk if they turn to the Mission for assistance that the Mission cannot provide rather than depending on other self-protection strategies.<sup>204</sup>

Civilians inside and outside the POC sites reported having very limited information about UNMISS’s mandate and protection role.<sup>205</sup> As one male civilian living outside of the POC sites in Bor stated, “UNMISS needs to explain to us why they are here, what they are doing, and what they can and cannot do to protect us. UNMISS needs to come up with a mechanism to explain their mandates.”<sup>206</sup> A woman living inside the Malakal POC site told CIVIC, “I know the mandate of UNMISS a little. Because people are now living under their mandate, they should have a certain way of teaching people.”<sup>207</sup>

UNMISS communication to the general population on its mandate and limitations should be an important objective of broader engagement. Ensuring that the general population can effectively communicate protection concerns to UNMISS should also be a priority objective. Aside from POC site leaders, civilians who spoke with CIVIC did not know how to contact anyone inside the Mission and none cited UNMISS as the actor they would turn to first in the event of a security problem.<sup>208</sup> Unclear communication pathways undermine UNMISS’s ability to predict, prevent, and interrupt escalating tensions and violence.

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199 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #45, Wau, February 2017.

200 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #45, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #48, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #52, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #55, Wau, February 2017.

201 Three different CSOs focused on women’s rights and protection told CIVIC that they do not feel there is a systematic way to report SGBV violations to the Mission and that the tracking of these incidents is a weakness. CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #45, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #136, Juba, February 2017.

202 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #3, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #11, conducted via Skype, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #22, Juba, January 2017.

203 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #25, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UN official, #175, New York, May 2017.

204 Stimson Center has conducted extensive research on this topic, including: Stimson Center, *Community Self-Protection Strategies: How Peacekeepers Can Help or Harm*, August 2013; Stimson Center, *Engaging Community Voices in Protection Strategies: Annexes on Lessons Learned*, November 2013.

205 CIVIC interview with civilian, #85, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #87, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #156, Bor, April 2017.

206 CIVIC interview with civilian, #156, Bor, April 2017.

207 CIVIC interview with civilian, #85, Malakal, April 2017.

208 CIVIC interview with civilian, #85, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #87, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #105, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #108, Juba, April 2017.

Another concern expressed by humanitarians and some civilians is whether and how information is filtering from UNMISS, through POC site leadership, down to other individuals within the camp, and vice versa. POC site leaders told CIVIC that they do take steps to disseminate information, including by having periodic POC site meetings with their constituencies, sharing updates with zonal and block leaders, and circulating information via megaphone in the camps.<sup>209</sup> Civilians and NGO staff working in the POC sites, however, questioned the speed and accuracy with which information is shared.<sup>210</sup>

Speaking about the process of information transfer from POC leaders to other civilians, a 42-year-old woman living in the Malakal POC site stated, “When there is a meeting, those people take information and give it to one person and they give it to another. Then the rest just find out from rumors and wait to see whether it is true.”<sup>211</sup> A South Sudanese NGO worker living inside the POC sites confirmed that, between the time leaders hear information and share it with POC residents, “sometimes the message becomes confused...There are a lot of rumors in the POC.”<sup>212</sup> Several NGO workers also raised concerns that POC leaders, at times, purposefully manipulate information for their own gain to the detriment of other civilians.<sup>213</sup>

UNMISS has some important avenues for broader outreach. For example, UNMISS reaches a wide spectrum of civilians through its Radio Miraya programming and by participating in radio programs broadcast by NGOs specifically for POC sites, such as Internews programming, which is focused on empowering civilians by providing them with information that is vital to their protection and well-being. Internews staff members regularly collect information on civilian perspectives on security issues inside the POC sites and try to create platforms where civilians can directly hear from or question humanitarian and UN officials about protection concerns.<sup>214</sup>

Senior Mission officials also interact with civilians during some types of public forums. Outside of the POC sites, these events appear to primarily take place as celebrations around important days and holidays. Inside the POC sites, town hall-style meetings are convened. The frequency of town hall forums seems to vary widely—from every two weeks in the Bor POC site to once per year in the Malakal camp.<sup>215</sup>

In one important case, a town hall meeting in Malakal was used by an incoming Head of Field Office to rebuild trust between UNMISS and POC residents after peacekeepers failed to protect civilians from an attack on the POC site by soldiers in SPLA uniforms. The incident resulted in the death of over 30 civilians, injury to 120 more, and the destruction of one third of the site.<sup>216</sup> During the meeting, UNMISS staff members apologized for not reacting more quickly, explained some of the limitations facing the Mission, and pledged to improve protection at the POC sites.<sup>217</sup> The town hall meeting was accompanied by concrete measures to increase security in the camp. Generally, civilians who attended town hall forums spoke very positively about the experience in interviews with CIVIC and requested more opportunities to meet with senior Mission officials.<sup>218</sup>

Given concerns raised by individuals who spoke to CIVIC, UNMISS personnel should consider monitoring whether and how information flows from POC site leadership to the general population in order to determine whether to include recommendations in the community engagement strategy for improving, complementing, or deprioritizing existing processes. UNMISS should also explore options for increasing direct avenues of communication between Mission personnel and the general population—whether by increasing the frequency of town hall forums, conducting periodic focus group discussions inside and outside the POC sites to better understand protection needs, extending the reach of Radio Miraya, making greater use of NGO communication platforms such as

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209 CIVIC interview with civilian, #159, Bor, April 2017.

210 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #27, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #62, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #129, Juba, February 2017.

211 CIVIC interview with civilian, #85, Malakal, April 2017.

212 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #88, Malakal, April 2017.

213 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #43, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #78, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #91, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #137, conducted via Skype, February 2017.

214 For an overview of Internews activities in South Sudan, see organizational website at <https://www.internews.org/south-sudan>.

215 Bor is significantly smaller than most other POC sites, and the small size of the Bor POC site is likely a factor contributing to the frequency with which these forums are organized.

216 For more information, see CIVIC, *A Refuge in Flames: The February 17-18 Violence in Malakal POC*, April 21, 2016.

217 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #75, location withheld, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #83, Malakal, April 2017.

218 CIVIC interview with civilian, #83, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #86, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #159, Bor, April 2017.

Internews, or creating hotlines or community centers where civilians can report issues.

### **Sustained versus one-off engagements**

One consideration of a national or subnational-level strategic engagement plan should be how much emphasis to place on one-off events with a broad reach versus repeated and longer-term engagements with individuals who may be able to influence societal change. One-off events are often easier to organize and implement than sustained engagement and require less in-depth knowledge of community actors and dynamics. Insecurity and cycles of displacement can also make repeated engagement a challenge. However, individual events may have limited protection gains.

In interviews with CIVIC, humanitarians, civil society leaders, and UNMISS personnel who reflected on the Mission's balance of activities felt that the Mission would see more protection successes if it refocused some attention from one-off events toward sustained engagement.<sup>219</sup> Failing to follow up with event participants can also prevent recommendations from developing into concrete action and leave civilians frustrated. As one UNMISS civilian official observed, "You can't just go up to people, you have to sensitize them. You can't just have a meeting once a month and say you will do something and not do it. You have to be there answering questions as much as possible."<sup>220</sup> A second UNMISS official told CIVIC,

We are trying to push [community engagement activities] into the programmatic structure rather than just having trainings. We need to try to be programmatic in what we do and push it forward. We can just do trainings and fill people up with workshops and do it again and again. Of course people show up because there is coffee, tea, [and] food. But we need to structure it, focus on who it is we should train; do a series, do training of trainers and people will have so much knowledge that they become [change agents].<sup>221</sup>

Both individual and repeat engagement activities are necessary, but they serve different purposes. UNMISS should strive for a broad audience with different types of community engagement focused on information dissemination, such as explaining UNMISS's mandate

to civilians, managing civilian expectations regarding how UNMISS can respond to protection threats, and sharing information on security concerns that could help civilians better protect themselves. Engagement activities that aim to build the capacity of local organizations and civilians to manage conflict, repair relationships across communities, or achieve societal change may be more useful if they are directed toward carefully selected or influential societal actors through repeated engagements.<sup>222</sup>

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219 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #28, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #29, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #52, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #55, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #58, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #129, Juba, February 2017.

220 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #28, Juba, January 2017.

221 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #79, Malakal, April 2017.

222 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #68, Juba, April 2017.

**UNMISS** Your Partner For Peace

Produced by the Communications and Public Information Section  
United Nations Mission in South Sudan

The billboard features a close-up photograph of a young child's face. The word "PEACE" is written in white, hand-drawn letters across the child's forehead. In the background, another child's face is partially visible. The United Nations logo is positioned in the bottom left corner of the billboard. The text "UNMISS" is in a large, bold, sans-serif font, followed by "Your Partner For Peace" in a slightly smaller font. Below this, in a very small font, is the text "Produced by the Communications and Public Information Section United Nations Mission in South Sudan".

Independence Road

A small billboard for Airtel, featuring the Airtel logo and some text that is difficult to read.

Small billboard for Skyfax Internet Services, featuring the text "EIL PAM" and "Skyfax Internet Services".

Small billboard for LESS FLEAS MORE, featuring a dog and the text "LESS FLEAS MORE".

Small billboard with a green and white design, possibly for a health or environmental organization.

Small billboard with a green roof and a map, possibly for a local business or organization.

Small billboard for Airtel, featuring the Airtel logo and some text.

Small billboard for Airtel, featuring the Airtel logo and some text.

## VI. TRANSLATING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INTO IMPROVED PROTECTION

This report has examined some of the notable community engagement practices that UNMISS undertakes, outlined challenges that have to be overcome to effectively engage communities, and raised questions that the Mission should consider as part of a more strategic approach to community engagement. However, a community engagement strategy and improved or more deliberate interactions with civilians will not necessarily translate into improved protection for civilians. How information that is gathered through community engagement is tracked, analyzed, and used by the Mission in decision-making processes is key, as is how the Mission coordinates with other protection actors in South Sudan.

### Tracking and sharing of information

Peacekeeping missions often struggle to establish effective tools and processes for information sharing and analysis that allow them to predict outbreaks of violence and take preventative action.<sup>223</sup> DPKO issued guidance in 2006 on the establishment of Joint Operations Centers (JOCs) as hubs within missions to bring together military, civilian, and police personnel and to improve the daily integrated information monitoring and reporting capabilities of peacekeeping missions. Joint Mission Analysis Centers (JMACs) were also created as an integrated way for missions analyze data trends and provide mission leadership with vital information for making operational decisions.<sup>224</sup> The DPKO/DFS Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping also instructs peacekeeping operations to use information collected from civilians through community engagement to

identify priority populations needing protection; ensure that information on security incidents is consistent and consolidated; and to develop threat assessments and POC threat matrices that allow them to determine where and when protection is most vital.

In several locations, UNMISS staff appear to be actively updating protection matrices to evaluate protection concerns. Matrices categorize threats based on urgency, have been created through some consultation with Protection Cluster members, and contain information that is shared with Force to help them make decisions around where to focus their patrols or efforts. While these matrices appear to contribute to the situational awareness of Mission personnel where they are in use, they are geographically limited and most useful only where UNMISS is able to collect data from multiple sources.<sup>225</sup> In some locations, threat matrices do not appear to be driving the protection work of the Mission.<sup>226</sup>

Several civil society leaders who spoke with CIVIC felt that clear lines of communication and reporting for human rights violations are lacking between CSOs, UN humanitarian agencies, and UNMISS, and that while many CSOs are collecting their own data on violations, this information is not being aggregated and systematically tracked by any one organization.<sup>227</sup>

UNMISS personnel also recognized a need to develop better guidelines, strategies, and systems for tracking, analyzing, and sharing information.<sup>228</sup> Currently, many UNMISS personnel receive and share information on protection threats received through community engagement primarily through daily and weekly reports circulated via email.<sup>229</sup> Some UNMISS officials expressed frustration that this method of information collection does not allow them to properly analyze data, understand threat trends, or prevent violence by deploying patrols or police officers to an area or at a

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**LEFT** *One of several billboards posted in Juba during January 2017 as a public information campaign that depicts UNMISS carrying out activities jointly with civilians.*

Lauren Spink

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223 UN DPKO and UN OCHA, *Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks, and Remaining Challenges*, 2009, 9.

224 UN DPKO, *Policy Directive: Joint Operations Centers and Joint Mission Analysis Centers*, July 1, 2006; UN DPKO/DFS, *Policy: Joint Mission Analysis Centers*, February 1, 2010.

225 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #112, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #116, Juba, April 2017.

226 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official #58, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, Juba, #119, April 2017.

227 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #45, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #136, Juba, February 2017.

228 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #41, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #112, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #123, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #124, Juba, April 2017.

229 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017.

# “It is hard for there to be dialogue to bring people together when the guns are not silent.”

—South Sudanese civilian

time when violence is likely to occur.<sup>230</sup>

According to Mission personnel, steps have recently been taken to increase collaboration and information sharing by Mission personnel across sections, such as the establishment of a Mission Planning Group and ensuring that key civilian, military, and police staff are co-located in the Mission’s Juba headquarters.<sup>231</sup> Despite improvements, however, effective information sharing was still a gap that existed within the Mission at the time of CIVIC’s research. In interviews with CIVIC, both civilian and military Mission officials expressed that they did not fully understand how individual reports were combined or used by other sections and Mission leadership. One civilian UNMISS official told CIVIC, “We send all information in through reporting, but never see how [others] use it. There is no room for reviewing the product and saying, ‘I don’t agree,’ or ‘this is one interpretation,’ or ‘yes, but we need to take into account x, y, or z.’”<sup>232</sup> Similarly, a military Mission official stated, “I do daily and weekly [situation reports], but it isn’t apparent to me where this gets all turned around and distributed.”<sup>233</sup> While certain sections within the Mission are focal points for receiving and combining reports—specifically the Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC) and the Joint Operations Center (JOC)—Mission staff outside of these sections described a situation where reports from each division are not circulated or viewed

by other departments unless individuals take the initiative to seek out these reports or request them.<sup>234</sup>

In part, information sharing across UNMISS sections is limited due to security concerns that information will leak and damage operations. However, information sharing is vital to the healthy functioning of the Mission. As discussed earlier, some civilian sections of the Mission specialize in engaging with civilians or gathering information, such as Civil Affairs and JMAC. At the same time, peacekeeping troops patrol in areas of the country where civilian personnel do not regularly have a presence and UNMISS civilian officials are sometimes blocked from investigating violations. Because different sections have different networks, areas of operation, and methods of gathering information, information sharing is vital to situational awareness for both civilian and military components of UNMISS.<sup>235</sup>

Finally, a lack of systematic information sharing makes it more difficult for UNMISS staff members to understand and see the impact of Mission activities and to communicate back to civilians regarding what action the Mission is taking to address protection concerns<sup>236,237</sup>—both factors that are key in translating community engagement into effective protection. It will not be appropriate for Mission personnel to widely

230 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, Juba, #112, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #123, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #124, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, Juba, #123, Juba, April 2017.

231 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #65, Juba, April 2017.

232 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #30, Juba, January 2017.

233 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017.

234 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #6, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #45, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #120, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #122, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UN official, #127, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017.

235 CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #100, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #122, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #123, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS military official, #124, Juba, April 2017.

236 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #131, Juba, February 2017.

237 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #30, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #8, Juba, January 2017.

share all reports. However, guarding information too closely due to fear of information leakages leads to information silos, which are equally, if not more, damaging to the functioning of UNMISS.

In a volatile operating environment like South Sudan, enhanced tracking and analysis of information could help the Mission prioritize responses appropriately. UNMISS should evaluate whether threat matrices are being effectively used at the field office and headquarters levels and whether reinforcing this tool could improve the situational awareness of the Mission. UNMISS may need to establish additional avenues of reporting for civil society organizations or communities to ensure that information in protection matrices is driven by engagement with civilians. UNMISS should also review current information sharing processes and procedures with a view to promoting adequate exchange of information across UNMISS sections and reducing information silos.

### From early warning to early action

Reflecting back on the weeks before the outbreak of violence in Juba in July 2016, many UNMISS officials felt that there were clear warning signs for renewed fighting. Despite warning signs that were clear to Mission personnel interacting with South Sudanese civilians, data from the JMAC, and coordination by the JOC, little definitive action was taken to deter violence or to position Mission assets to prevent or respond to political violence in the capital. According to Mission personnel and humanitarians, the capacity of the Mission to collect and triangulate early warning information has improved since July 2016 under the leadership of the JOC and due to a renewed focus on early warning meetings with key Mission sections and partners to contribute to situational awareness.<sup>238</sup>

However, for community engagement to strengthen UNMISS's protection responses, Mission officials

need to ensure that improved early warning leads to decisive action, repositioning the Mission when needed to prevent violence.<sup>239</sup> As one UNMISS employee stated in an interview with CIVIC, "early warning is not something that you capture and put in a computer. You have to respond."<sup>240</sup> Prevention is a difficult task for any peacekeeping mission, but early warning meetings need to be decision-making forums where staff members are empowered to alter plans based on information. This might entail increasing the number of early warning meetings or ensuring that staff—through wider information sharing—are fully updated on developing situations ahead of meetings.<sup>241</sup>

Further, DPKO/DFS should solicit commitments of uniformed personnel from Member States that are willing to negotiate flexible memorandums of understanding (MOUs) that allow troops, police, and equipment to be deployed to various parts of the country as needed.<sup>242</sup> UNMISS has, at times, been blocked by the South Sudanese government from bringing equipment into the country, such as cargo and attack helicopters, that would allow it to move troops more quickly and respond to violence in more remote areas of the country.<sup>243</sup> The UNSC should therefore also support UNMISS by applying sustained political pressure on the government to allow these capabilities.

In the longer term, UNMISS should consider developing community alert networks (CANs). Community liaison assistants could potentially develop current contacts into a more concrete system of information collection and alerts based on information from South Sudanese civilians rather than international analysts.<sup>244</sup> Civilians often receive information about security threats in person or via telephone through personal networks.<sup>245</sup> UNMISS could, in the future, explore how to leverage civilian networks for early warning or how to support NGOs involved in building early warning and community-level security working groups.<sup>246</sup> However,

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238 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #51, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #111, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #145, Juba, April 2017.

239 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #93, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #95, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #123, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #145, Juba, April 2017.

240 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #77, Malakal, April 2017.

241 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #30, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #130, Juba, February 2017.

242 MOUs are binding agreements between the UN and troop- and police-contributing countries that outline the responsibilities, standards, personnel, equipment, and self-sustainment services that contingents are required to provide or meet.

243 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #58, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #121, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #145, Juba, April 2017.

244 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #22, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #116, Juba, April 2017.

245 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #45, Wau, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #71, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #78, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #83, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #167, Bor, April 2017.

246 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #115, Juba, April 2017.

# “We the women are not being prioritized in those security meetings.”

—South Sudanese civilian

in order to avoid exposing civilians to risks or raising expectations that cannot be met, UNMISS should ensure that it has adequate geographic access and capacity to respond rapidly to alerts before investing in formal CANs.

## Strategic and two-way communication outside of the Mission

The HIPPO report recommends that peacekeeping operations “prioritize the development of tailored and dynamic communications strategies that support mandate implementation” and “help the local people better understand the mandate of the mission and its activities, but also serve to build trust and a sense that the United Nations is with them.”<sup>247</sup> As explored earlier in the report, strategic communications plans could be a part of the larger community engagement strategy for UNMISS. Many civilians who spoke with CIVIC lacked a strong understanding of the Mission’s mandate and limitations, and Mission personnel were cognizant of the need to strengthen communication with civilians around these issues.<sup>248</sup>

More than strategic communication, though, UNMISS needs to develop meaningful two-way communication

with civilians. Two-way communication with civilians entails making efforts to follow up on recommendations made by civilians to explain if recommendations were implemented, and if not, why;<sup>249</sup> providing information to civilians that can improve their security;<sup>250</sup> and communicating through discussions and consultations as opposed to only collecting information.<sup>251</sup> Without two-way communication, civilians can become frustrated with the Mission, assume that sharing information with the Mission has no value, and stop reporting issues to UNMISS.<sup>252</sup>

In an interview with CIVIC, a female POC site resident who was volunteering to raise awareness on SGBV for an NGO stated, “When [UNMISS] comes, we interact and talk and come up with resolutions. We wait and they never come back to us.”<sup>253</sup> One woman living in the Malakal POC site gave a personal example: “People come and reports are given to those people, like my relative who was kidnapped. They took his photos, information, and then no feedback. We expect when something is raised to get feedback.”<sup>254</sup> UNMISS officials also recognized this problem. One civilian official warned, “There is a perception that Civil Affairs [staff] are just coming for reporting...We need to be able

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247 UN, *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations*, 81-82.

248 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #65, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #95, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #93, Malakal, April 2017.

249 CIVIC interview with civil society leader, #14, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #15, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #18, Juba, January 2017.

250 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #10, conducted via Skype, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #31, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #41, Juba, February 2017.

251 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #41, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #137, conducted via Skype, February 2017.

252 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #16, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #31, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #78, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #99, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #161, Bor, April 2017.

253 CIVIC interview with civilian, #177, Malakal, April 2017.

254 CIVIC interview with civilian, #94, Malakal, April 2017.

to be equal with people and to share back with them for relationships.”<sup>255</sup> Another said, “Sometimes [civilians] are not seeing our role or the purpose of recoding those things. They want to see action, want to see public reports quarterly.”<sup>256</sup>

Stressing the importance of sharing information back to communities to allow civilians to make informed decisions about their own protection, a South Sudanese NGO worker told CIVIC, “Sharing and communication is part of [prevention]...Info sharing can even save lives. It can be more valuable than water, more valuable than other things. I can only encourage them to do two-way communication sharing with the community.”<sup>257</sup> A second South Sudanese NGO staff member expressed concern that “civilians are ignored in their own protection.”<sup>258</sup> Certainly the Mission does make attempts to share information back to communities, but because it often does so in a somewhat ad-hoc way, it may not be highly visible to civilians.

There are some tools already managed by international organizations and NGOs that UNMISS could use to increase its two-way communication with civilians. Internews has interactive programming with POC site residents that UNMISS could use more strategically to respond to civilian concerns or to share security information with civilians.<sup>259</sup> The humanitarian cluster system has organized a Communicating with Communities working group that UNMISS could engage with to explore whether and how collaboration could be mutually beneficial.

While UNMISS can increase its use of existing humanitarian tools for communicating with civilians, it should also consider developing new tools for engagement. UNMISS relies heavily on information from humanitarian actors who engage with civilians to inform its programming. Some humanitarians expressed

concerns to CIVIC that sharing sensitive data with UNMISS personnel could compromise humanitarian principles,<sup>260</sup> or felt that the Mission was relying too heavily on them for data, even attempting to task them, at times, to conduct research with the civilian population on particular issues.<sup>261</sup> To reduce its reliance on humanitarians, UNMISS could also consider creating an office within POC sites where some staff members, possibly PIO, Civil Affairs, or RRP officers, could be more readily available to the community, or it could create a telephone line where civilians could report issues.<sup>262</sup> An office for PIO and RRP personnel in the POC site or a telephone line distributed to civilians inside and outside the POC sites could also be tools for collecting feedback from communities on how the Mission is performing and whether particular trainings and public forums were well-received. This final element of two-way communication could help UNMISS to evaluate its community engagement activities.<sup>263</sup>

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255 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #131, Juba, February 2017.

256 CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #95, Malakal, April 2017.

257 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #31, Juba, January 2017.

258 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #171, Bor, April 2017.

259 In interviews, many civilians told CIVIC that they do not listen to Radio Miraya because most programming is in Arabic or English as opposed to their primary language, and because it does not provide much information on security concerns in their location. In POC sites, civilians repeatedly named Internews programming as an important source of information for them. CIVIC interview with civilian, #40, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #71, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #87, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with UNMISS civilian official, #90, Malakal, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #103, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with civilian, #108, Juba, April 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #146, Juba, January 2017.

260 CIVIC interview with UNMISS police official, #7, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #29, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #170, Bor, April 2017.

261 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #8, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #27, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #32, Juba, January 2017.

262 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #31, Juba, January 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #41, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #129, Juba, February 2017.

263 CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #41, Juba, February 2017; CIVIC interview with humanitarian actor, #129, Juba, February 2017.



*IDPs in Kuda, a village 45 kilometers west of Juba, are appealing for humanitarian assistance after being displaced in fighting between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and a group of armed men. An UNMISS assessment team visited the area to assess the humanitarian and security situation. September 26, 2016.*

Isaac Billy

## VII. CONCLUSION

UNMISS faces many challenges and barriers to engaging communities in South Sudan. As this report has highlighted, challenges range from the South Sudanese government directly and systematically blocking UNMISS's movements to the increasingly ethnic dimensions of the violence, which limits CLA travel, and the quickly changing conflict dynamics that make maintaining updated conflict analysis and program planning difficult.

While the challenges are clear, so is the need for UNMISS to adopt a people-centered approach and involve civilians in their own protection. In the past, government and military figures have manipulated political-level dialogues and peace negotiations for their own gain. Civilians have not been sufficiently included or consulted in national peace processes. With political stalemates at the national level, investing in local-level engagement to improve protection and resolve conflict is vitally important. Moreover, improved community engagement could help UNMISS provide more effective protection for civilians by building community trust in the Mission and facilitating better information collection and sharing, which is essential for situational awareness and crisis prevention. At times, engagement can also facilitate movement and access for activities such as patrols.

UNMISS already conducts many community engagement activities. Force troops discuss protection concerns with communities while on patrols; UNPOL officers manage Community Watch Groups in the POC sites and are the main interlocutors for POC residents on security issues; Human Rights staff build relationships with community members that allow civilians to report violations; RRP manages Quick Impact Projects and interfaces with humanitarians inside the POC sites; Public Information Officers inform communities about the Mission's mandate, activities, and limitations; Civil Affairs staff lead inter-communal dialogues to address ethnic and agro-pastoral tensions; and Heads of Office oversee CLAs, organize higher-level dialogues, and can reach out to larger numbers of civilians through town hall forums.

All of these activities contribute to protection of civilians, but as UNMISS develops more strategic community engagement planning, UNMISS will need to make difficult and deliberate decisions about where to engage and who to engage. A greater emphasis on engaging women, youth, and civilians from the general population could serve UNMISS's ultimate goals of reducing conflict and improving civilian protection. As part of strategic community engagement,

UNMISS should consider shifting some efforts from one-off events to sustained engagement with key actors. Engagement inside the POC sites needs to be balanced with engagement outside, and UNMISS will need to continue searching for opportunities to bridge the communal divides between civilians living inside and outside the POC sites, in consultation with community members themselves, to ensure that risks to civilian participants are minimized and appropriate intermediate steps are taken to prepare communities for dialogue.

For community engagement to drive improved protection, UNMISS will need to ensure that it has in place clear policies and tools that promote joint data collection and analysis, information sharing across Mission sections, capabilities and decision-making processes that enable early deployment of personnel in response to early warning, feedback and two-way communication with civilians, and coordination with humanitarian actors on engagement and information sharing. Ultimately, across all sections of UNMISS, additional training and buy-in are needed to build appreciation for the importance of community. Training and prioritization of community engagement are not the sole responsibility of UNMISS staff and leadership in South Sudan. The focus on community engagement and a people-centered approach to peacekeeping needs to be driven by UN bodies in New York as much as by actors in the field.

## **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

***“Let US Be a Part of It”: Community Engagement by the Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan*** provides a detailed look at how military, police, and civilian components of the United Nations peacekeeping operation in South Sudan (UNMISS) are engaging communities to understand and address civilian protection concerns. Whether the engagement is by uniformed personnel on patrol or Civil Affairs staff conducting inter-communal and subnational dialogues, these interactions are a vital part of involving civilians in their own protection. The report highlights the importance of UNMISS personnel conducting strategic and coordinated engagement activities and ensuring that information collected from civilians is used to inform operational decisions.

## **ABOUT CENTER FOR CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT**

**Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)** works with armed actors and civilians in conflict to develop and implement solutions to prevent, mitigate and respond to civilian harm. We call on and advise international organizations, governments, militaries, and armed non-state actors to adopt and implement policies to prevent civilian harm. When civilians are harmed, we advocate for the provision of amends and post-harm assistance. We bring the voices of civilians themselves to those making decisions affecting their lives.

**BACK COVER** *A UN peacekeeper foot patrols in the Protection of Civilians (PoC) site in Malakal, South Sudan, on February 26, 2016. Fighting between elements of the Shilluk and Dinka communities erupted in the Malakal PoC on February 17 and continued on February 18. UN reports confirm that armed men in Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) uniforms entered the UN camp and fired on civilians, looting and burning tents. At least 18 people were killed and more than 90 wounded. February 26, 2016.*

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