The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local conflicts are often perceived as intractable, deeply rooted in ancestral antagonisms, and beyond the reach of the international community's policies and solutions. They take place at the subnational level, often without the direct involvement of governments or formal, organized armed groups and yet they have far reaching consequences. They not only cause significant insecurity to civilians and communities at large, but they also have the capacity of derailing peace processes. Local conflicts tear away at the social fabric of a community and undermine a community's resilience, further reducing the feasibility of a sustainable peace process.

Even though local solutions to local problems are preferable and often more sustainable, this does not mean that local conflicts occur in isolation from wider national, regional and global contexts. In many instances, a breakdown of political and peace processes at the national and regional level as well as outbreak of civil war exacerbate local conflicts. Climate change and other structural factors can also intensify local conflicts.

Because local conflicts are intertwined with the national, regional, and global contexts it is not unusual for influential political leaders at the national or even regional levels to serve their agendas by manipulating existing local-level tensions such as those between herders and farmers, or exploiting struggles between customary authorities. Furthermore, local conflicts – especially with the proliferation of automatic weapons – have become increasingly deadly and destructive, often fueled by regional dynamics.

The United Nations is increasingly recognizing the importance of addressing local conflicts, but this is more in response to the destructive nature of local conflicts and the threat they pose to civilians rather than because they are understood as an integral part of the larger and complex conflict landscape that peacekeeping operations are mandated to tackle.

By strengthening early warning mechanisms, supporting localized peace agreements and promoting community dialogue, peacekeeping operations have demonstrated creativity, innovation

and expertise in working to address complex and entrenched local conflicts. A number of different units and offices within peacekeeping operations including Civil Affairs, JMAC, and POC are involved in efforts to address local conflicts, and each unit or office brings different areas of expertise and skills useful in fostering multidimensional engagement with local conflicts. Several missions, including UNMISS and UNAMID, have successfully threaded the complexity of local conflict dynamics into the broader national analysis and their political strategy to implement the mandate. Notwithstanding these examples, this study emphasizes that instead of engaging in preventive work to address the root causes of local conflicts, peacekeepers seldom go beyond reacting to violence that results from local conflicts, focusing instead on quick-fixes that are rarely sustainable in the long run.

Addressing local conflicts at this level is not without its challenges. Missions are rarely explicitly mandated to resolve local conflicts and often lack the necessary funds and administrative and budgetary nimbleness needed to address them effectively. Limited resources and the complexity of local conflicts require that peacekeepers and other actors develop criteria to prioritize local conflicts. Moreover, limited political will from a government to address local conflicts can hamper peace operations efforts, particularly regarding local capacity-building. Additionally, a lack of legitimate, capable local partners to own local conflict resolution threatens long-term sustainability.

Peacekeeping operations have struggled to recruit specialized context-specific skills required to effectively address local conflicts in a given country or region. And to date, no attempts have been made to conduct a rigorous scientific impact assessment of projects and activities aimed at addressing local conflicts.

This study identifies some emerging good practices in addressing local conflicts, and in developing a coherent methodological framework to prioritize local conflict engagement relative to their potential to undermine political processes. Cross-mission partnership is essential to ensuring complementarity and avoiding duplication of efforts to address local conflicts. Collaboration between units in most missions remains largely ad hoc, and without clear objectives, monitoring and evaluating the impact of UN peacekeeping operations' efforts to address local conflicts becomes challenging.

Peacekeeping can therefore leverage its political capital, its military and logistic assets, its resources, and its presence on the ground, to support the resolution of local conflicts. But this must be part of a concerted effort fully owned by local stakeholders. The local stakeholders' ownership of processes and interventions seeking to address local conflicts will be crucial to sustainable and successful resolution mechanisms.

INTRODUCTION

As peacekeeping evolves from traditional to multidimensional complex operations, addressing local conflicts has become a key concern for the UN: how to draw the line between ancestral century-old disputes and the latest confrontation that brought the UN to deploy peacekeepers? Is it even useful to make such distinction when local conflicts can result in higher number of casualties, displaced people, and destroyed livelihoods than the "official" conflict? Can such distinction be made in the highly interlinked world we live in today?

These are some of the question that this study seeks to address by looking at peacekeeping practices to identify best practices in prioritizing interventions where sources of violence are multiple, and where the ability of the UN to address them is constrained by resources, capacities, mandate, and strategic objectives.

It seeks to explore how to optimize interventions (i) to ensure local conflicts do not derail the political process that the UN is fostering to reach a sustainable settlement, and (ii) to reduce the risk of violence against civilians. Prioritizing interventions to address the root causes of local conflicts can be seen as the most effective strategy to prevent the recurrence of violence, and to sustain peace in the long term.

With the generous support of the Government of Japan, the Civil Affairs team in the Policy & Best Practices Service (PBPS) has set out to examine current practices in peacekeeping operations to address local conflicts. This study draws upon qualitative research; an in-depth review of primary and secondary literature and data; and semi-structured interviews with UN personnel, international and national NGOs, academia and thinktanks. The Civil Affairs team conducted these interviews both at UN Headquarters and in the field, including in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and South Sudan,

The Civil Affairs team validated initial findings during an expert – practitioner workshop in Kampala, Uganda on the 2nd and 3rd of June, 2016, and through a broad consultation process at UN Headquarters and in the field. This consultation process included both DPKO and non-DPKO stakeholders including UNDP, UNOCC, PBSO and DPA. The Civil Affairs team also consulted external stakeholders such as the German Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), the Stimson Center, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), and the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi). Finally, the Civil Affairs team conducted a follow-up field mission to South-South in June 2017 to pilot the recommendations in the UNMISS Field Office of Rumbek.
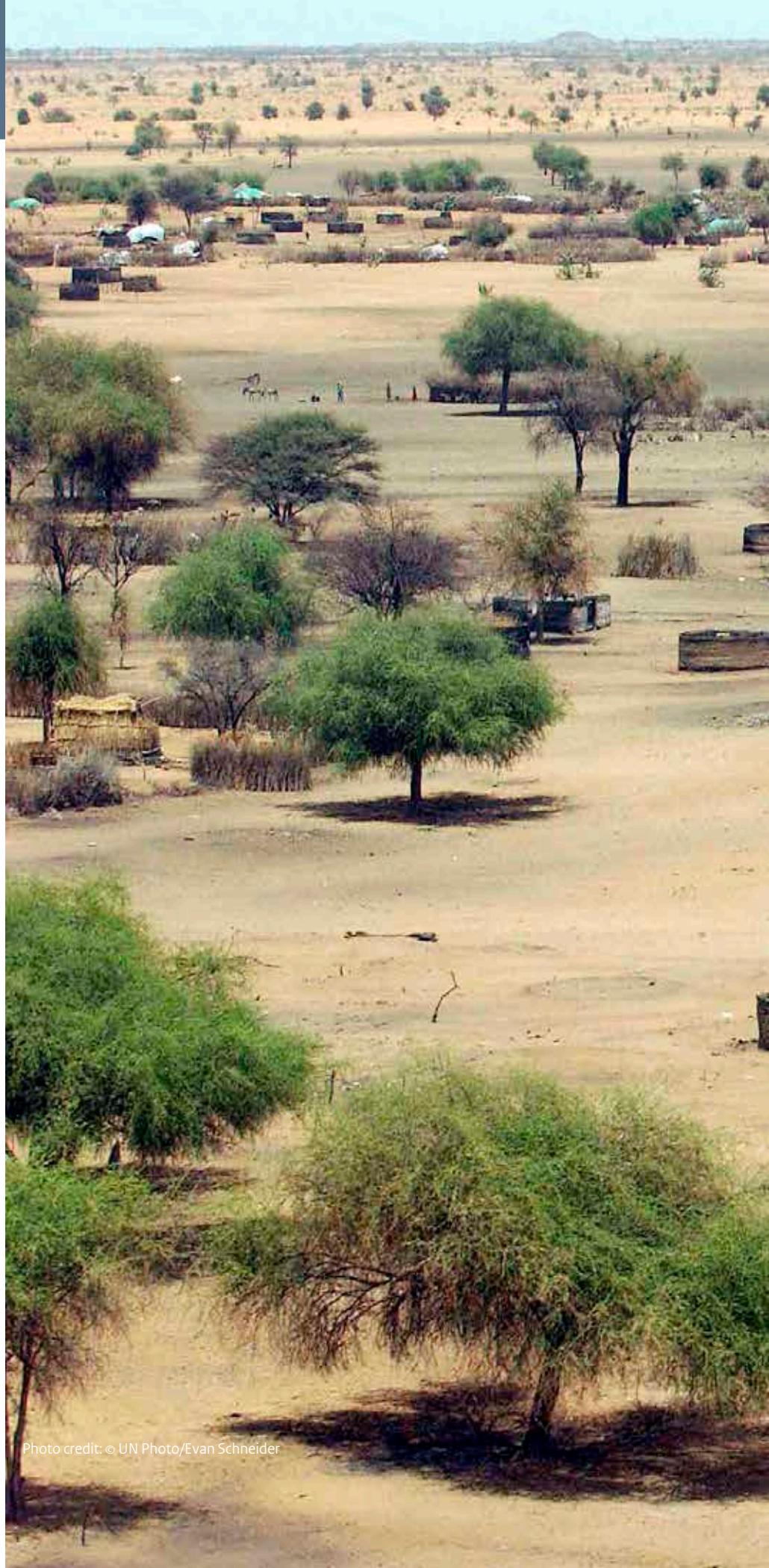
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1.

SECTION ONE: DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING "LOCAL CONFLICT"

Broadly defined, local conflict "[involves] violence or the risk of violence centered at the subnational level."[1] Such conflicts do not usually feature significant direct involvement from state actors. Governments may ultimately enable such conflicts, or may indirectly support the sub-national actors that are more directly involved in these disputes. However, governments are not the primary agents of local conflicts. Organized armed groups may not be primary actors in these local conflicts, either. Nor are individual people within a community who harbor a grievance against another individual. Instead, such violence typically occurs through informal or loosely-organized structures and social groupings at the community level. These structures may include local self-defense militias, for example, with relatively flexible in-group membership, more limited resources, and comparatively constrained offensive military capacities.

The term "local conflict" is used in this study to describe conflicts that are inter-communal and intra-communal in nature. Analysts frequently regard these conflicts as occurring between two distinct communities separated by ethnicity or other identity markers. In these accounts, identity is perceived as the root cause of local conflicts. In reality, however, competition for, and exclusion from, power and

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1   Stimson Center, "Local Conflict, Local Peacekeeping", (2017), p. 7

resources is at the root cause of local conflict. Elites manipulate identity to amplify conflicts; identity is not itself a root cause. This flawed analytical emphasis on identity as a driver of conflict leads to incorrect diagnosis, and consequently to interventions that do not address the true root causes of a local conflict.

Local conflicts are a substantial threat to peace and security. Localized violence is likely to generate more casualties than any other type of conflict driver. In Darfur, for example, almost 2,000 civilians were killed in 2013 during what is widely considered to be the most violent surge of inter-communal conflict in the region's recent history.[2] The clashes between the Rezeigat and Ma'alia in East Darfur state alone caused approximately 600 deaths. This was largely fueled by competition over land and triggered by an incident of cattle rustling. This violence also displaced more than 140,000 civilians in East Darfur,[3] highlighting the significant destabilizing threat of local violence. In South Sudan, attacks by Lou Nuer youth on ethnic Murle in the aftermath of the country's 2011 independence caused up to 612 civilian deaths in Jonglei alone.

Academics and policymakers alike have challenged this definition, arguing that even seemingly "localized" conflicts may be affected to a significant degree by national or regional conflict drivers. Yet these concepts and conflict drivers need not be mutually exclusive. Local conflicts over cattle in South Sudan, for example, have taken on radically different dimensions. In this context, many Dinka and Nuer youth have now acquired arms as a result of the national political crisis which has pitted the predominantly Dinka government against the majority-Nuer opposition. Violence linked to the seasonal migration of cattle and their herders across the Central African Republic (CAR) is a key driver of escalatory conflict between Fulani herders and "local" sedentary farming communities. National armed groups – including former Séléka elements and Anti-Balaka combatants – have compounded these dynamics. And the conflict has taken on a profoundly transnational characteristic given the international transit corridors of cattle herders, including from Chad into CAR. This example highlights the complex inter-relationships between local, national, and regional conflict drivers that peacekeepers confront.

Complex local conflict drivers also transcend simple categorization: they are often inter-related, deeply linked to other drivers of violence at the local, national and regional level. They are a product of competition over power to control authority, force, and resources. Access to power improves access to authority, force and resources; a lack of power leads to marginalization and exclusion. Regimes that monopolize power ultimately generate high levels of exclusion that will in time lead to their demise. On the other hand, democratic societies rely on their ability to maintain a sustainable power balance and minimize phenomena of marginalization to sustain peace.

This study argues that while identity is not a cause of conflict, it can still be the basis for marginalizing social groups from power - which results in violent contestations of the status quo distribution of power. Identity can therefore become a "conflict multiplier", legitimizing narratives developed to justify these claims to seize power. The dominance of these identity-based narratives in conflict confound international actors' analysis, leading them to erroneously characterize conflicts in the Balkans as "wars of religion", and violence in Rwanda as "ethnic strife", for example.

The following textbox offers a series of short case studies to highlight the various local conflict drivers combine in different country contexts to spark social marginalization, exclusion and tension (see Annex 1 for detailed case study):

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2   UN OHCHR / UNAMID, "Human Rights Situation in Darfur in 2013", (2016), p. 17
3   UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary General on the African Union – United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur", S/2013/607, (2013), p. 8

DRC local conflict drivers

- Contestation of land ownership. A complex and often contradictory legal regime for land ownership has generated conflict between elites and rural farming communities, and between formal and customary laws.
- Control for economic resources, including but not limited to minerals. In Ituri, for example, an explosion of local conflict in the mid-2000s marked the culmination of decades of intensifying rivalry between Hema and Lendu communities to control commodities including gold, timber, diamonds and coltan.
- Local power and leadership contestations. Mass displacement of local populations can create local-level leadership vacuums, and ensuing violent contestation to secure formal power; in Beni and Oicha in 2014, for example. following an exodus of refugees and IDPs fleeing violence.

CAR local conflict drivers:

- Seasonal pastoralist migration. Sedentary farming communities and cattle herders migrating into and within CAR have frequently clashed during the pastoralist migration season, in April and May. National-level conflict in CAR has forced cattle herders to shift migration routes and sparked violence.
- Historical grievances over socioeconomic inequalities. Gbaya Christians' widely-held perception that Muslims dominate business and commerce in CAR – and of the diamond industry in particular - has caused local conflict.
- Contestation of land ownership. Prior to French colonial administration of CAR, the country had no system of private or commercial land ownership. Inconsistent application of the post-colonial legal framework for land tenure has aggravated inter-communal tensions, in the 3rd and 5th districts of Bangui, for example.

South Sudan local conflict drivers:

- Competition for constrained economic resources. Pastoralists from Jonglei, who had previously migrated through Upper Nile State, have now largely changed rout to Western Equatoria. Farming communities in these regions view pastoralists as a threat and a drain on "their" water and soil resources.
- Changing elites and local power structures. Civil war has displaced traditional community leaders, for example in Warrap State, leading to power vacuums that other elites have sought to fill.
- Contestation of land ownership. Various South Sudanese laws recognize the right of customary authorities to administer ownership of land. Yet these two systems have frequently come into conflict with land ownership deeps disputed by tribal leaders. In Eastern Equatoria, disputes over land tenure between Madi and Acholi tribal communities have led to violent local conflicts.

1.1 Categorization

Any given local conflict may transcend multiple thematic categories. The aforementioned conflict triggered by cattle migration in CAR is evidently a dispute centered on economic resources. Cattle are an essential part of CAR's economy. But they are also a source of social capital, and the size of one's herd is often synonymous with one's standing within the community. Similarly, cattle are a marker of socio-economic status in South Sudan. Cattle are particularly significant for

dowry payments during marriage; this incentivizes young men to engage in cattle rustling to acquire sufficient cattle to pay the dowry for their future spouses. Reciprocal cattle rustling therefore represents not only an attempt to secure economic resources, but to seize social capital.

Violence is also justified through the dehumanization of the adversaries. In these instances, different social groups' perceptions of historic inequality and injustice along ethnic and religious

lines become critical to explain and foment conflict. Sedentary farming communities in CAR, for example, have come to see Fulani herders as "foreign Muslims" implicitly linking them to the collective memory of historical slave raids in northern CAR, predominantly by Chadian Muslim slave traders, capturing and enslaving Christian Central Africans. Broader apprehension of Muslims by some of CAR's Christian communities may also be driven by a widespread perception that Muslim 'foreigners' have enjoyed superior access to

economic resources for decades[4] , for example in the ownership of diamond mines. Local conflicts are thus complex and multifaceted, and defy simple thematic categorization.

1.2 Links to national and regional conflicts

Local conflicts have the potential to destabilize and even derail national peace processes or political dialogue. This is a critical concern in Mali. Elements of the Fulani community, which is not formally represented in the country's peace process, has engaged in local conflict with the neighboring Bambara community in Mopti region[5]. The ongoing violence is an obstacle to political dialogue at the national level, and highlights that a comprehensive peace in the country will not be possible without addressing this local conflict driver and addressing Fulani exclusion. This highlights that regional and national peace is likely to be unattainable without addressing local conflicts.

Contrastingly, national-level conflict and political cleavages may also compound local conflicts. The militarization of communities and inter-communal relations can be an unintended consequence of civil war. But this effect can be exacerbated when national, regional and local actors deliberately manipulate and mobilize their communities to protect personal economic and political interests. The situation in South Sudan is a case in point. Influential politicians in Juba with vested economic and political interest have instigated local conflicts, as have

influential individuals in the South Sudanese diaspora. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, "local agendas [have] provided national and regional actors with local allies to maintain military control, continue resource exploitation and persecute political or ethnic enemies.[6]" National politics thus impacts local conflicts.

The recent rise of the Kamuina Nsapu rebellion in the DRC's Kasai provinces appears linked, at least in part, to a rejection of the legitimacy of the ruling authority of the province's governor, who is widely regarded as a political ally of President Joseph Kabila and his administration.[7] The Government of DRC's controversial decision to postpone national elections initially scheduled for late 2016, causing political upheaval among competing political parties and elites, appears to have also had a destabilizing ripple effect upon local conflicts across the country.

Structural factors may also lead to an intensification of violent local conflicts. In Haiti, for example, the consequences of climate change have the potential to negatively impact local conflicts over land ownership and control of economic and farming resources. With increasingly harsh and common droughts, excessive precipitation, increased flooding and extreme weather events, Haiti's viable economic and agricultural resources that are the subject of violent competition between local groups are likely to become increasingly strained. Public health emergencies, natural disasters and other macro-level events and structural factors may therefore compound local conflict dynamics .[8]

1.3 Dispute resolution mechanisms

Disagreement and conflict is prevalent in all societies and communities on the planet, and is a basic social dynamic that UN peacekeepers cannot and should not attempt to eliminate entirely. In this regard the focus should be more on conflict transformation rather than conflict resolution. Indeed, dispute and conflict may be a legitimate means by which to assert an individual or a group's rights. Supporting sustainable mechanisms for their peaceful resolution is fundamental to fostering inclusive societies and legitimate state institutions.

The classical "Western" conception of these institutions is predominantly anchored in the formal justice system – a functioning system of courthouses, trained lawyers and prosecutors. In many cases, these institutions have intervened in a positive manner to adjudicate in cases of local conflict. In south Darfur, for example, in February 2016, formal justice institutions played an essential role in responding to conflict between Fallata and Salamat communities. However, in many of the instances where local conflicts become violent, such formal justice institutions are either not present, not regarded as legitimate in the eyes of local communities, or not operationally functional.

Functioning informal or traditional dispute resolution mechanisms – led by elders and leaders that are widely respected by local community members – are critically important. However, the

4   Lombard, Louisa, quoted in Lister, Tim, CNN, "Religious violence in CAR plagues most abandoned people on earth", (2013)
5   International Crisis Group, "Mali: An Uprising in the Making?", (2016), p. 32
6   Séverine Auteserre, "The Trouble with the Congo", (2009), p. 176
7   International Crisis Group, "Kamuina Nsapu Insurgency Adds to Dangers in DR Congo", (2017), p. 9
8   Barnett, Jon & Adger, W. Neil, "Climate change, human security and violent conflict", Political Geography, Vol. 26, (2007), p. 640

countless examples of the failure or declining popular legitimacy of these mechanisms can, in many instances, explain why local conflicts become violent. The legitimacy of these authorities often stems from their ability to peacefully manage community conflict and to maintain the social order. When they fail to do so, their authority is contested by those that can organize and exert force. At times this translates into a generational conflict. In other cases, traditional leaders may even sanction local conflict. In Darfur, in December 2016, a Fur and a Misseriya had an altercation under the influence of alcohol in the Mukjar IDP camp. Community leaders on both sides responded by sanctioning escalatory acts of violence against each other. This incident led to civilian injuries and the loss of lives, particularly amongst the Fur.

National conflict can also undermine these informal dispute resolution mechanisms, in turn leading to an intensification of local conflicts. In Watalinga, DRC, in late 2014, many traditional leaders crossed the border into Uganda to escape the threat of violence posed by the ADF-Nalu armed group. As a cocoa farming region of the DRC, local leaders have played an important role in mediating conflicts over land tenure and agricultural resources. Yet community members that remained in Watalinga reported a breakdown in these dispute mechanisms after traditional leaders fled to Uganda, and a series of incidents of violent seizure of cocoa farming land. The vast majority of these traditional leaders have now returned, but their legitimacy to mediate these disputes has been widely brought into question by community members.

Local conflicts are, therefore, extremely complex. They are intricately tied to national and regional conflicts; they involve a multitude of different actors; depend on the absence of legitimate informal or formal dispute mechanisms; and transcend social dynamics, economics, politics, and history. And their resolution is of critical importance to broader peace and security, given the magnitude of the threat they pose to civilians' security and to the success of peace processes.

Key points: Defining and understanding local conflict

- Local conflicts occur at the sub-national level, often not featuring the direct involvement of governments or formal, organized armed groups
- This form of violence is often a major threat to civilians' security and can derail political processes
- Civil war, regional conflict and national-level political breakdown can compound local conflicts
- Structural factors such as climate change can also contribute to an intensification of local conflicts
- Local conflicts often yield violence in absence of legitimate mechanisms for dispute resolution. These mechanisms may be formal or informal

2.

PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS AND LOCAL CONFLICTS

There is growing recognition within the UN that local conflicts matter. In Darfur and South Sudan, the UN Security Council (UNSC) has explicitly authorized peacekeepers to address local conflicts. In 2014, the UNSC authorized the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) to "support the mediation of community conflict, including through measures to address its root causes."[9] Engagement with local conflicts was consequently defined as one of the mission's three strategic priorities. In the same year, it mandated the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) to "facilitate inter-communal reconciliation in areas at high risk of conflict", recognizing these activities as "an essential part of long-term state-building activity."[10] Seeking to implement these mandates, UNAMID has developed a dedicated strategy to addressing local conflicts and UNMISS is in the process of finalizing a similar strategy.

Yet, in practice, peacekeepers have often come to regard local conflicts as a secondary priority. This is driven in part by the widespread perception that local conflicts are static and driven by ancient, feudal hatreds that are beyond the scope of a UN peace operation – particularly given the limited timeframe for its deployment, and its limited resources. While recognizing these limits and the complexities of local conflicts, this study will explore the negative consequences of relegating local

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9   UN Security Council "Resolution 2148", S/RES/2148, (2014), p. 19
10   UN Security Council, "Resolution 2155", S/RES/2155, (2014), p. 3

conflicts to a second-order concern. It will also highlight promising practices deployed by peacekeepers to preventively address local conflict drivers.

2.1 Protection of civilians dilemma

This second-order consideration of local conflicts can have negative consequences for missions mandated for the protection of civilians (POC). UN peacekeeping operations have an obligation to protect civilians "irrespective of the source of the threat.[11]" But, in common practice, peacekeepers design POC strategies first and foremost based on an assessment of the threat that armed groups pose to civilians' security. To a secondary degree, POC strategy development may also be informed by an assessment of the threat that national security service personnel of the host government pose to civilians' security. However, peacekeepers rarely prioritize violence that occurs at the community level – primarily below the level of governments or organized armed groups – in developing POC strategy.

To a large extent this is the consequence of a widespread perception that community conflicts are simultaneously too complex and too trivial for peacekeeping forces to prevent them. Local conflicts instead become a matter of concern for peacekeeping only when they result in a significant number of deaths, triggering reactive interventions after violence has occurred. Often, there is insufficient analytic information regarding key trends in local conflicts;

the multiplicity of these conflicts makes it extremely challenging to track all of them, even for a well-staffed mission. However, there is an opportunity to be seized to use existing POC mechanisms and structures to take a more holistic approach to understanding local conflict dynamics in mission settings. It is important to underscore that this is not a uniform reality in all missions. Shat several peacekeeping operations, including MONUSCO, have made progress in POC strategy development that also prioritizes threats generated by local conflicts.

2.2 Reactive versus preventive engagement

When peacekeepers do engage with local conflicts, as we will explore at length in the subsequent section of this study, interventions have been largely reactive in nature. When local conflicts flare in South Sudan, for example, the "blue helmets" may be deployed to intervene to protect civilians at imminent threat. Civil affairs officers may intervene to diffuse tensions by promoting dialogue and supporting mediation efforts between the warring parties. But the second-order prioritization of local conflicts, combined with limited understanding and analytical information on their drivers, results in little preventive engagement with local conflicts before they become violent – or with the root causes of these local conflicts.

The High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) has highlighted the critical importance of preventive engagement with the root

causes of armed conflict.[12] Responding to local conflicts once they had yielded violence is clearly more costly, both in terms of civilian casualties and the expenditure of a mission's resources. However, an emphasis on prevention by peacekeeping missions necessitates not only stronger analytical and early warning mechanisms, but also the ability to influence the dynamics that have an impact on conflict dynamics and their root causes. The complex web of interlinkages among the local, regional and global dimension of conflicts is somewhat at odds with the circumscribed mandates of peacekeeping missions, as well as the limited range of political tools available to peacekeepers to induce political will and support to address local conflicts' root causes. As a consequence, peacekeepers' reactive engagement with violent local conflicts is likely to remain substantially more common than preventive engagement. Clear alignment on objectives and vision for this engagement from the international community is important to reinforcing preventive engagement.

2.3 Prioritization and limited resources

Given the proliferation of violent local conflicts in many peacekeeping contexts, and given the inevitably limited resources of UN peacekeeping operations, peacekeepers are forced to make difficult decisions about which local conflicts to address as a priority. However, these prioritization determinations are "often approached ad hoc and are not consistently influenced by rates of violence against civilians. [13]"

9   UN Security Council "Resolution 2148", S/RES/2148, (2014), p. 19
10   UN Security Council, "Resolution 2155", S/RES/2155, (2014), p. 3
11   UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations / Department of Field Support, "The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping: DPKO / DFS Policy", (2015), p. 6
12   High-Level Independent Panel on Peacekeeping operations, "Uniting Our Strength for Peace – Politics, Partnership and People", (2015), p. ix
13   Stimson Center, "Local Conflict, Local Peacekeeping", (2017), p. 19

The Stimson Center offers three broad criteria to guide peacekeepers' response and prioritization. UN peacekeeping operations should "prioritize addressing local conflicts that involve high rates of violence against civilians, a risk of atrocities, or a risk of destabilizing the national political process.[14]" The report documents how disenfranchised actors excluded from political processes may use local violence to attempt to gain access to peace talks, or how actors may also seek to use violence to deliberately stall the agreement or implementation of a fragile political agreement. Furthermore, local interests and allegiances can eclipse parties' willingness to commit to a national political process; even if national-level representatives of an institution are committed to national-level peace talks, local-level representatives engaged in local conflicts may seek to undermine these commitments.

Operating in an environment of imperfect information, where accurately predicting a given local conflict's potential to spark violence against civilians, atrocities, or destabilize a political process is challenging, peacekeeping operations face continued obstacles to rigorous prioritization of which local conflicts to address first. In this regard, the development (as suggested in annex 9) of a methodical approach to determine and monitor indicators of marginalization and exclusion at the local level could become a useful tool to anticipate the degeneration of existing tensions, and the propensity to use violence to address them.

2.4   Comparative advantage

UN peacekeeping operations may have a comparative advantage relative to state actors, local civil society groups, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and other actors in addressing local conflicts. UN peacekeeping operations' military component is an evident source of comparative advantage. Peacekeeping forces can be leveraged to either protect civilians at risk from local conflicts, or to create situations conducive to inter-communal dialogue. The Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) reports that UN peacekeeping operations typically also have more advantaged logistical capabilities[15] than many other categories of actors, and can leverage these resources to address local conflicts – for example, in transporting local mediators to inaccessible locations where there is a threat of violence.

Similarly, peacekeeping operations have the advantage of scale; with robust presence in remote parts of the country that NGOs or civil society groups struggle to access, the UN can reach parties to local conflicts that may be otherwise inaccessible to other potential interveners. GPPi also highlights that UN peacekeeping operations may be the "provider of last resort"[16] in these cases, where few if any legitimate actors or mediators exist to seek to address local conflicts.

Peacekeeping operations can also combine civilian conflict resolution capacities with a vast array of other civilian, police and military capacities in responding to local conflicts. Peacekeepers are likely to be better-positioned than any other actor

to implement a multidimensional response to these local conflicts. Leveraging partnerships with other actors, such as UN agencies, peacekeeping operations bring different capacities and specialized skills to bear in the mediation and reconciliation of local conflicts.

Most crucially, peacekeeping missions maintain higher political ground given their status as the explicit expression of the political will of the international community, as articulated by the mission's mandate authorized by the UN Security Council. While this may prove more challenging in practice, and may also be contested by some of the local stakeholders, this status nevertheless provides peacekeeping missions with political leverage that very few other actors have when engaging with national authorities and domestic political actors.

Finally, peacekeepers often are better connected than other actors to national and local stakeholders that can positively influence local conflicts. Peacekeepers can leverage these networks to address local conflicts. MINUSCA's Civil Affairs Section led efforts to restore Muslims' access to the Boeing cemetery in Bangui, convening senior decision-makers from the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Ministry of Social Affairs, and Ministry of Reconciliation to form a coordination committee to address this issue – which had immense potential to spark violent local conflict.

Nevertheless, UN peacekeeping operations are not always perceived as the most appropriate, effective

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14   Stimson Center, "Local Conflict, Local Peacekeeping", (2017), p. 5
15   Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), "Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peacekeeping operations: Practical Challenges and Tools for the Field", (2016), p. 14
16   Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), "Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peacekeeping operations: Practical Challenges and Tools for the Field", (2016), p. 21

or legitimate actor to lead attempts to address local conflicts. While peacekeepers may have received some limited training on mediation, there are rarely experienced senior mediation practitioners amongst UN peacekeeping operations' human resources. Without these capacities, peacekeepers may not have the necessary capacities to successfully address local conflicts. Similarly, where UN peacekeeping operations are not regarded as neutral or impartial actors by parties to a dispute, there is unlikely to be demand for the UN to become involved in addressing the local conflict. And given the short-term nature of a peace operation's deployment, and the complex nature of local conflicts that often require sustained long-term engagement, other actors may be better placed to support the creation of legitimate dispute resolution mechanisms.

Key points: Peacekeeping operations and local conflict

- There is growing recognition within the UN of the importance of local conflicts
- But local conflicts remain a second-order concern for most peacekeeping operations, threatening the security of civilians affected by such violence
- Where peacekeepers do seek to address local conflicts, there is little preventive engagement with the root causes. Most engagement is reactive to violent incidents
- With limited resources and many complex local conflicts to address, the development of criteria by which to prioritize local conflicts to engage will be essential
- UN peacekeeping operations have an advantage over other actors trying to address local conflicts, but should also recognize their own limitations

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3.

MAPPING STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS WORKING TO ADDRESS LOCAL CONFLICTS

A peace operation's staff are among the most important resources that it can draw upon in addressing local conflicts. Different offices, sections and units play diverse roles in different functions of peacekeeping operations' engagement with local conflicts. Coordination and complementarity of these sections' efforts nevertheless remains challenging in many peacekeeping contexts. While this section focuses on the various actors within a peace operation that can play a role in addressing inter-communal conflict, it is important to underscore that all these parties maximize their impact when collaborating with partners beyond the mission itself, as discussed in Section Four of this study.

Military components play a key role in terms of prevention, acting as a deterrent by conducting patrols and providing security in areas where violence is most likely to erupt. Military components also mitigate the effects of violent clashes by deploying on site, or through the establishment of a temporary operational base (TOB) where tensions are mounting – dependent on the mission's mandate, resources, and strategic posture.

Civil Affairs Sections typically lead on the implementation of efforts to mitigate and resolve local conflicts. Civil Affairs staff have designed, implemented and evaluated projects to mediate and foster peace agreements between parties to local conflicts. Performing a "good offices" function at the local level, Civil Affairs and heads of Field

Offices often play a critical role in laying the ground for initial efforts to promote community dialogue and mediation initiatives, where local mediators alone would have been unable to spark the process.

Civil Affairs Sections are also frequently involved in capacity-building work with local partners, reinforcing the conflict resolution capacities of regional civil society actors to lead these mediation efforts. Civil Affairs Sections in diverse missions have also supported reconciliation processes in the aftermath of violent local conflicts, rebuilding trust and positive relations between two groups engaged in such a dispute.

In several cases, Civil Affairs Sections have also produced and maintained maps of inter-communal conflict dynamics. These maps include information about conflict dynamics, the actors or communities involved the geographical scope of the conflict, existing conflict resolution mechanisms, and the wider impact of the conflict. Such mapping efforts have tended to focus on conflict drivers and spoilers, while seldom reflecting influential peace actors and community resilience factors. Mapping rarely reflects the political dimensions of a particular conflict dynamic and the extent to which the violence is also shaped by national or regional conflict drivers.

Where Civil Affairs Sections do implement such a mapping platform, analysis also rarely includes gender dimensions of conflict. Gender-sensitive analysis may reveal the different ways that conflict impacts different genders within a society; the specific needs and interests of different genders after the conflict; and the changing ways a given local conflict might impact gender roles in a community.

Joint Mission Analysis Center, or "JMAC", is an integrated structure that provides multi-dimensional analysis on a medium and long term perspective to inform senior leadership decision-making processes. JMACs are not tasked with producing analysis to address local conflicts, but, based on requests formulated by the mission leadership, their analysis can include monitoring of trends and dynamics between armed groups and communities, and can result in profiles of armed groups and individuals. The JMAC is also responsible for consolidating a threat assessment for the whole mission each six to 12 months, consolidating the various political, security, and humanitarian risks that the mission may face. Several UN peacekeeping operations have begun to deploy JMAC units at regional office level to improve their ability to gather information and conduct analysis, but their ultimate audience remains the senior leadership at Mission Headquarters.

Joint Operations Center, or "JOC", is an information hub, collecting and synthesizing information from various mission components on a daily basis. JOCs have a short term perspective, differing from JMACs' medium and long term perspectives, and are mainly geared toward producing integrated daily, weekly, and monthly reports for situational awareness.

Political Affairs Sections formulate analysis on political dynamics at the national-level, and contribute to the design and implementation of the mission's strategy for engagement with these political issues. However, such analysis seldom focuses on links between political dynamics at the national level and local conflicts. National-level political engagement also rarely prioritizes local conflicts in its advocacy work, including

with host governments. Political Affairs Sections have the scope to play a role in the mitigation of local conflicts, even if somewhat indirectly through advocacy with national-level political interlocutors.

Protection of Civilian (POC) Units are charged with mission-wide coordination of analysis of threats to civilians. POC Units are also responsible for the operational planning of efforts to prevent, mitigate, and respond to threats of physical violence to civilians. As explained earlier in the study, POC strategy – and the analysis that informs it – tends to prioritize the threat posed by organized armed groups or government forces to civilians, while local conflicts may not directly implicate these actors. Loosely-structured self-defense groups are, instead, often the primary actors to local conflicts. Nevertheless, POC Units can play an essential role in mitigating and responding to the violence resulting from local conflicts, as well as in early warning and analysis of violent local conflicts.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Units' work with ex-combatants is closely linked to local conflict dynamics. DDR Units implement a series of projects, known as community violence reduction (CVR), that contribute to community stabilization and seek to offset any potential security issues at the local levels – while also addressing potential tensions between ex-combatants and surrounding local communities.

Human Rights Offices have the scope to play an important role in the early warning and analysis of the threat posed by different local conflicts. Gathering evidence and information about human rights violations through systematic monitoring, investigation and reporting, such analysis can

generate vital information to inform peacekeepers' efforts to address local conflicts. Nevertheless, concerns about the confidentiality of victims of human rights violations have proved an obstacle to Human Rights Offices' cross-unit collaboration with other functional teams and sections.

Strategic Communication and Public Information teams play an important role not only in communicating the work of the mission, but also in outreach and peace messaging efforts to prevent or mitigate the outbreak of violent local conflicts. In many contexts, traditional media outlets such as radio broadcasting play an important role in these efforts, but digital communications and social media platforms are an increasingly central effort of Public Information efforts to mitigate local conflicts.

Rule of Law Units, known as "ROL", have also played an important role in strengthening the justice institutions that provide legitimate mechanisms to resolve local conflicts. RoL Units can therefore play a role both in mitigation and resolution of local conflicts. Such interventions often prioritize formal justice mechanisms and, as explored in a previous section of this report, informal, traditional mechanisms may in many instances be regarded as more legitimate means by which to resolve local conflicts.

UN Police, known as "UNPOL", deploys Police Officers to engage local communities and understand local conflicts and sources of tension. UNPOL is involved in mitigation and resolution work, working directly with potential or actual partners to a local conflict. Information yielded by UNPOL community engagement can be better leveraged by different units across the mission in designing and implementing their own response to local conflicts. UNPOL can also deploy to a given area to prevent conflict triggers from occurring, supporting efforts to protect civilians.

Finally, **mission leadership** can also play a vital role in peacekeeping operations' engagement with local conflicts. SRSGs have vocally championed and prioritized local conflicts, including in Darfur and South Sudan where the missions are mandated to work on these issues by the UN Security Council. SRSGs can also engage in high-level political negotiations with national stakeholders who may be able to positively impact local conflicts within their jurisdiction, and to ensure local ownership of efforts to address local conflicts.

Collaboration between these many different units, offices and teams remains largely ad hoc within most missions. The "recommendations" section of this report will build upon this finding, proposing actionable steps to improve strategic alignment of these divergent but nevertheless complementary efforts to address local conflicts.

Key points: Peacekeeping operations and local conflict

- A wide range of different thematic units and offices within UN peacekeeping operations – including Civil Affairs, JMAC, and POC units - have been involved in efforts to address local conflicts
- These different units bring different areas of expertise and skills, and can all play an important role in fostering multidimensional engagement with local conflicts
- Cross-mission partnership is essential to ensuring complementarity and avoid duplication of efforts to address local conflicts
- Yet collaboration between these units in most missions remains largely ad hoc

4.

EMERGING PEACEKEEPING PRACTICES TO ADDRESS LOCAL CONFLICTS

In response to local conflicts, and the great threat they can pose to civilians' security and to national-level peace processes, UN peacekeeping operations have deployed an array of different interventions seeking to address this violence. These interventions can broadly be divided into three categories: early warning, mitigation, and resolution. This study also considers peacekeepers' efforts to monitor and evaluate all three of these forms of intervention.

4.1   Early Warning

Threat assessment and analysis can inform early warning of emerging local conflicts, but effectively calculating where, when, how and why local conflicts will spark violence remains challenging. Academic researchers have leveraged innovative research methodologies to improve peacekeeping operations predictive capacities – for example, studying cellphone usage data in Côte d'Ivoire and finding "unique communication patterns "[17] that emerge imminently before the eruption of violence. These patterns were distinctive from cellphone communication around international football matches, large concerts or other events and crises.

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17   Berger, Daniel et al, "Violence and Cell Phone Communication: Behavior and Prediction in Côte d'Ivoire", (2014), p. i

Several UN peacekeeping operations have deployed risk assessment frameworks, leveraging qualitative and quantitative indicators to assess different threats. Annex 2 provides a high-level framework by which to design a risk assessment framework, and Annex 3 provides an example of the output of MINUSMA's analytical framework. MINUSCA has implemented a "Flashpoint Matrix" (Annex 6.1) to assess these threats, generating analysis of different local conflicts to inform a multidimensional response from different units within the mission. For example, MINUSCA's POC coordination forum regularly reviews the Matrix to inform priority actions to protect civilians from the threat of violence. Similarly, MONUSCO has implemented a "Risk Assessment Framework" (Annex 6.2), assigning local conflicts "high", "medium", or "low" rankings consistent with the magnitude of the threat posed by each. Geographic information system (GIS) mapping technologies have also been leveraged by both missions' JMACs, generating a visual overview of emerging threats. Such frameworks have tended to focus on national-level political conflict drivers and the activities of armed groups, but are increasingly attuned to local conflicts.

Local conflicts are often complex, entrenched and intertwined with other conflict drivers. In collecting information on all relevant data inputs, such risk assessment frameworks risk generating an overload of information about local conflicts. GPPi found that MONUSCO's Risk Assessment Framework had identified 744 local conflicts in North Kivu, South Kivu and Orientale alone, and that 215 of these were ranked as "high priority." As a result, GPPi

Photo credit: © UN Photo/Martine Perret

reports, "the mapping data has not been used by other sections of the mission…"[18]. Communicating this data in an accessible manner to decision-makers therefore remains a challenge. Annex 4 provides an overview of how to effectively structure analytical reporting to ensure clarity and cogency of information dissemination.

"Low-tech" tools have also been effectively pioneered by other UN peacekeeping operations in conducting threat assessments and analyzing local conflicts. UNAMID has implemented a "Community Alert Network" (CAN) system, whereby local authorities and civil society actors report immediate threats and sources of mounting tension to the mission, reinforcing lines of communication with local security forces and civil affairs staff. Civil Affairs staff in Darfur have worked directly with local community members to monitor emerging threats and sources of tension at the local level, leveraging these insights to inform the mission's preventive and reactive engagement with violent local conflicts. This

preventive engagement has included work around recurring threats that are most susceptible to triggering violence, including the seasonal migration of cattle and dry season where resources are strained.

Similarly, outside of a peacekeeping setting, UNAMI has deployed networks of "Governorate Liaison Officers" (GLOs) across Iraq to pre-emptively identify signs of emerging local conflicts with the potential to spark violence or destabilize national-level political dynamics. GLOs, all of whom have received training on mediation and with extensive experience in the Iraqi local context, report this information back to the mission's Political Affairs leadership. GLOs advise on remedial actions to be taken to mitigate the outbreak of violence sparked by local conflicts.

These examples highlight the efforts peacekeepers have made to develop and reinforce early warning systems. However, preventive action to engage with and address the root causes of local conflict – rather than responding to its

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18   Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), "Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peacekeeping operations: Practical Challenges and Tools for the Field", (2016), p. 33

violent manifestation – has received comparatively fewer resources and less attention.

Reporting is one important output of these analytical efforts. Civil Affairs Sections have led on producing reports on local conflicts, highlighting and reporting on specific incidents of local conflict, and the mission's corresponding efforts to address those incidents. UNAMID and UNMISS both transmit regular monthly reports with an overall situational update distributed across the mission, for example. However, few other UN peacekeeping operations prepare these reports so systematically or distribute them so widely.

Even when missions do report on local conflict, this information seldom informs effective cross-mission planning. There are two principal causes of this disconnect. Firstly, information on local conflict is typically not packaged or presented in an accessible manner. Various units and sections may struggle to effectively interpret this raw data. Secondly, the information itself is rarely shared laterally within the mission to other sections that may benefit from such information. Current efforts to develop user-friendly platforms to visualize quantitative and qualitative analysis of local conflict dynamics is expected to offer an opportunity to "socialize" the understanding that peacekeepers may have of local conflict dynamics through formats that make analysis more accessible to other parts of the mission.[19]

Furthermore, **gender sensitive local conflict analysis** is rarely prioritized. Armed violence in general, and local violence specifically, is gendered both in terms of its causes and consequences. Understanding how conflict affects different gender groups within a society is essential for analytical purposes and, as a consequence, for policymaking. Most peacekeeping operations have only limited understanding of diverse gender perspectives – and do not integrate such gendered analysis into their efforts to prevent, mediate and resolve conflict.

Gender-sensitive conflict analysis is a tool that enables peacekeepers to integrate the perspectives of these different genders into their decision-making. Five important considerations underpin gender sensitive analysis of local conflicts:

- Who are the principal actors engaged in the local conflict, and what are their genders?

- How does the local conflict impact different genders in the community?

- How has the local conflict impacted the roles and functions of different genders within the community?

- Do certain consequences of the local conflict impact different genders differently?

- What are the needs and interests of different genders in the community as a result of the local conflict?

Leveraging these perspectives and analysis, peacekeepers can make informed decisions about who they partner with in addressing conflict; where they choose to engage; which beneficiaries they seek to support; engagement strategies that serve all groups, and that do not marginalize vulnerable groups. Gender sensitive analysis also yields a more robust understanding of a given conflict; its effects on different social groups; its root causes and consequences; and in turn the most effective strategies for resolving conflict.

Lessons learned: Early warning

- Threat assessment is essential to informing efforts to mitigate violent local conflict
- It is challenging to pinpointing precisely when, how and where localized violence will occur
- Risk assessment frameworks have provided a helpful tool to guide these efforts
- While new technologies can be leveraged to make this information accessible across the mission, "low tech" solutions to analyze threats can still be effective
- Peacekeeping operations seldom conduct gender-sensitive local conflict analysis, resulting in limited understanding of how the different needs and priorities of different genders as a result of violent local conflicts

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19   PBPS is currently working in partnership with the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) and other partners to develop a new methodological approach to local level conflict analysis and intervention design.

4.2   Mitigation

One obvious form of mitigation is the military **deterrent** that peacekeeping can provide to an outbreak of violence by deploying its troops. However, this can only ever be a temporary solution to mitigate escalation of violence and reduce casualties. As a consequence, peacekeepers' efforts to mitigate the outbreak of local conflicts have taken many different forms. One critical but challenging undertaking to this end is **advocacy**, an important activity that is implemented varyingly by Political Affairs and Civil Affairs Sections. Having identified the different stakeholders involved in a local conflict, peacekeepers can engage them and advocate against

the use of violence. This advocacy itself can take various forms; for example, MINUSTAH's targeted engagement with specific local community leaders and political actors in Haiti in advance of the 2016 elections to advocate for peaceful inter-group relations.

MINUSMA has partnered with community-based radio stations in Mali to broadcast calls for peace, targeting northern regions of the country affected by local conflicts – and where these broadcasts may mitigate against a resumption of violence. UNISFA, the mission in the Abyei region of Sudan, convenes leaders from the Misseriya and Dinka Ngok communities on an annual basis to facilitate a localized

peace agreement, aiming to prevent the outbreak of violence over access to land during the livestock migration season.

And while there continue to be relatively few trained mediators amongst peacekeeping operations' human resources, various resources within the UN system offer specialized mediation services that peacekeepers have drawn upon. The following textbox provides an overview of some of the mediation support services that exist and that peacekeepers can more effectively draw upon:

UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA)

- DPA's Mediation Support Unit (MSU) is a central hub for mediation support within the UN system, providing professional, cross-cutting support to "good offices" activities.
- MSU provides technical and operational support for peace processes; strengthens the mediation capacity of the UN, its partners, and parties to a conflict; and develops and disseminates mediation guidance, lessons learned and best practices.
- MSU operates a 'Standby Team of Mediation Experts' who can be deployed within 72 hours, in addition to a 'Mediation Experts Roster', which is a database of senior mediators, operational-level mediators and technical-level experts including personnel available for longer deployments.

UN Development Programme (UNDP)

- UNDP has provided capacity development and accompaniment to insider mediators and insider mediation processes in countries including Bolivia, Fiji, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Nepal, Timor-Leste and Uganda.
- UNDP-supported insider mediators work from within a given context, leveraging their knowledge, relationships, and reputations to prevent and resolve conflict.
- UNDP also trains international mediators on emerging best practices, increasing the cadre of international staff with the required mix of technical and non-technical expertise to support insider mediators in their efforts.
- UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)
- PBSO helps to sustain peace in conflict-affected countries by garnering international support for nationally owned and led peacebuilding efforts
- The office assists and supports the Peacebuilding Commission and administers the Peacebuilding Fund financing – among other projects – mediation among conflicting parties.

Capacity-building can also play an essential role in peacekeepers' efforts to mitigate local conflicts. UN peacekeeping operations have worked to reinforce the abilities of local actors to identify local conflicts, mitigate violence local conflicts, and foster reconciliation between parties that had engaged in violence against each other. In the context of the Special Political Mission (SPM) in Iraq, UNAMI has worked closely to provide technical training to local civil society organizations to mediate local conflicts, for example.

Other missions have worked with host governments to build their capacity to address local conflicts. UNIFIL, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, has worked to strengthen the capacity of district authorities – one of the lowest tiers of public governance in Lebanon – to "monitor local conflicts, defuse inter-communal tensions and increase conflict resolution initiatives."[20] Such efforts have focused on addressing violence between the country's "delicate mosaic of mutually balancing sects, large families and minority religious communities."[21]

UNOCI, the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, has worked with prefectural authorities across the country to implement a "conflict analysis matrix" owned and managed by the Ivorian government. UNOCI developed five modules to train local authorities in conflict analysis and reporting, and leveraging the data to inform response to prevent local conflict. UNOCI also used Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) to provide the necessary I.T. infrastructure for the prefectural authorities to implement, manage and own this system. Local government officials reported that the matrix had driven its engagement with the local conflict that broke out in Bayota and Lakota immediately prior to the presidential elections of 2015.

However, as the following section of this report will detail, there are significant challenges to partnering with a government that may not be viewed as legitimate by local communities – or that is indirectly involved in local conflicts in the country.

Furthermore, **partnerships and coordination** are crucial to preventing local conflicts. MINUSCA's efforts to address and prevent local conflict over land, water and grazing resources during the cattle migration season is a case in point of effective partnerships and coordination. Working closely with the Government of CAR, local civil society groups, INGOs and private sector actors, MINUSCA's Civil Affairs Unit has helped foster a robust cross-sector partnership to implement a coordinated effort to prevent violence as cattle herders migrate across the country.

This partnership has enabled MINUSCA and the various parties to the partnership to help avoid duplication of parallel efforts; to identify areas where different partners possess a "comparative advantage" relative to other actors in technical expertise or logistics, and where they should therefore take the lead; and to transparently share information and best practices on interventions that successfully prevent local conflicts over pastoralist migration from sparking violence.

Lessons learned: Mitigation

- Peacekeepers have leveraged advocacy efforts to influence stakeholders not to engage in violence, and to mobilize actors who may help promote peace
- Building the capacity of local actors to mitigate local conflict is essential for sustainability, but is challenging in contexts where few legitimate local partners exist
- Effective partnership with external actors – including the UN Country Team, development actors, local civil society and the host government – can improve the likelihood that efforts to mitigate violent local conflict will succeed

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20   UN Support System in Lebanon, "UN Strategic Framework, Lebanon, 2017 – 2020", (2016), p. 3
21   Oren Barak, "Intra-Communal and Inter-Communal Dimensions of Conflict and Peace in Lebanon", (2002) p. 622

4.3   Resolution

As established in the previous section of this study, UN peacekeeping operations' efforts to address local conflict have primarily been "responsive", reacting to local conflicts once they have yielded violence. For this reason, many of the case studies of successful engagement with local conflicts fall into this category of resolution, with missions **supporting community reconciliation** after violence. These projects work to reinforce inter-communal harmony, rebuild trust and mutual confidence, and establish peaceful relations between sub-national actors who had clashed in local conflicts. However, efforts to facilitate community dialogue and reconciliation initiatives in conflict affected-contexts must also be understood as preventive initiatives that decrease the likelihood of a relapse into conflict and strengthen peaceful conflict solution mechanism. Support to conflict transformation thus comes full circle; this is why peacekeeping efforts to support dialogue and reconciliation need to be strengthened to advance the prevention agenda.

UN peacekeeping operations rarely play a direct role in organizing and leading inter-communal dialogue to resolve local conflicts. However, peacekeepers frequently play an essential role in creating enabling conditions to support these local conflict resolution efforts. This includes working with communities to identify the most appropriate third parties to: conduct dialogue and deliver the political message that the UN is promoting and supporting resolution efforts; facilitate these dialogues, in some cases; disseminate of the outcome of the dialogue; and accompany and support those individuals and groups responsible for implementing the agreement.

Given the fast-changing local conflict context, missions leveraging flexible resources such as Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) have been able to positively impact resolution processes. MINUSMA has supported the facilitation locally-driven negotiations between herder and farming communities in the Mopti region of Mali through a so-called "flood plains conference" to agree on measures to reduce violence during the upcoming migration season. MINUSMA worked with the participants to disseminate the results – rather than leading on the broadcasting itself – and to share information about the conference agreement with local communities. This approach also helped to assuage potential concerns that MINUSMA had sided with either the farmers or the pastoralists. The mission also supported the implementation of the agreement, working with the parties to officially demarcate the cattle herder migration routes provisionally agreed through the conference.

UNOCI has leveraged innovative civilian-centric approaches to confidence-building in communities where the legacy of violent local conflict in the mid-2000s continues to undermine mutual trust. This includes the use of traditional theater, which brings together different ethnic and religious communities to witness and participate in theatrical productions in a safe space. Such measures aim to build confidence and trust between these communities. UNMISS has facilitated workshops to foster dialogue between the Lou Nuer and Murle groups in Jonglei state, in response to heightened local conflict between the two communities. For example, in the first quarter of 2017 alone, the mission supported dialogue and local conflict resolution in 20 different geographic regions. The mission's Civil Affairs Section has coordinated discussions between the parties, aiming to prevent a future resumption of previous hostilities and contribute to renewed peaceful ties between these communities.

4.4   Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Without a clear strategy for analyzing and engaging with local conflicts, it is deeply challenging to monitor, evaluate or assess the impact of UN peacekeeping operations' efforts to this end. Relatively few missions have clear monitoring and evaluation frameworks or indicators by which to assess engagement with local conflicts. No attempts have been made to formally establish the impact of these initiatives through robust impact evaluation.

Nevertheless, UN peacekeeping operations have increasingly explored

Lessons learned: Resolution

- Most UN peacekeeping operations' efforts to address local conflicts have focused on resolution, responding to local conflicts once they have already sparked violence
- Missions have supported community reconciliation, reinforcing inter-communal harmony and re-building trust between different sub-national actors engaged or previously engaged in local conflicts

efforts to assess whether their interventions to address local conflicts are having an effect. Annex 5.1 and 5.2 provide a set of sample indicators by which to design a monitoring and evaluation framework for peacekeepers' engagement with local conflicts. MINUSTAH's transition and drawdown has prompted the mission's Civil Affairs Section to introduce a set of stabilization indicators, offering a measure of the number of ongoing local conflicts and of the proportion that are resolved peacefully. Such indicators offer a means for MINUSTAH to quantify important changes, both positive and negative in local conflicts. This provides some limited evidence to see if the mission's efforts to engage local conflicts are correlated with any positive outcomes in targeted geographies and communities.

MONUSCO has partnered with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) to conduct public opinion polls to assess community perceptions of peace, justice and reconstruction in eastern DRC. HHI has built a digital mapping platform, which is accessible to the general public, to highlight all results of the polling. This offers a means by which to track and interpret key trends in the Congolese population's perceptions of the region's security and justice landscape. This system allows mission leadership to explore attitudinal shifts in the areas targeted by peacekeepers seeking to address local conflicts. The same initiative is now in the process of being launched in the CAR with UNDP and in partnership with MINUSCA.

Local perceptions are a key vector to analyze local trends and mission should make additional efforts to ensure they have access to existing resources, but also to complement the findings of regular public opinion surveys conducted by entities that have the expertise and know-how, with in-house approaches including focus groups, local media monitoring (including social media where applicable), and public meetings and discussions.

Lessons learned: Monitoring, evaluation and learning

- Beyond UNMISS and UNAMID, few peacekeeping operations have a strategy to address local conflicts
- Without clear objectives, monitoring and evaluating the impact of UN peacekeeping operations' efforts to address local conflicts becomes challenging
- No attempts have been made to conduct a rigorous scientific impact evaluation of such projects

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Photo credit: © UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

5.

CHALLENGES TO ADDRESSING LOCAL CONFLICTS

Despite the promising practices profiled in the preceding section that UN peacekeeping operations have deployed to address local conflicts, significant obstacles remain to peacekeepers' effective engagement with and mitigation of this form of violence.

Firstly, conflict management processes alone - without complementary efforts to address structural and root causes of conflict - are unlikely to result in sustainable peace among communities fighting each other. Any efforts by UN peacekeeping to address local conflict dynamics need to be rooted in an articulated and sophisticated analysis that does not stop at proximate causes, and instead identifies the root causes of the conflict. Only through such an understanding can intervention identify suitable entry points for targeted interventions aimed at shifting conflict dynamics by proposing mechanisms and processes for their peaceful settlement. In the absence of legitimate mechanisms and institutions to mediate these disputes, local conflicts are likely to yield violence. Therefore, UN peacekeeping operations' efforts to address local conflicts in the absence of an overarching sustainable political settlement, encompassing a basic degree of rule of law and accountability of state institutions, are likely to have limited long-term impact.

Secondly, local conflicts transcend state borders. Many such local conflicts are associated with the seasonal migration of humans and animals, for example, that move across often-porous borders of states. Post-conflict societies often face large-scale returns of displaced persons, including refugees who had temporarily fled to neighboring countries to escape violence. This highlights the significant interlinkages between local, national and international conflicts, and that even when the conflict exists "below" the national level it may not necessarily be confined within the borders of a single state. The transnational nature of organized crime or of illegal exploitation of natural resources is another clear example of how local realities can be affected by regional and global dynamics. However, peacekeeping missions are typically given a mandate to operate only within the borders of the host-country, limiting the potential for transnational interventions.

INGOs have innovated to implement projects and initiatives that address local conflicts that spill across nations' territorial borders. The INGO Interpeace, for example, has facilitated cross-border dialogue and activities including baking competitions for youth from Burundi, DRC and Rwanda, seeking to build trust and deconstruct stereotypes of ethnic groups present in all three countries. The Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD) has supported the dissemination of cell phones to nomadic herder communities in Niger and Mali, reckoning that increased communication will lead to decreased inter-communal tensions during migration season.

Thirdly, a given state's capacity and volition to meaningfully address local conflicts can be a significant obstacle to UN peacekeeping operations' successful engagement with this dynamic. In many cases, state authorities at the national, provincial and local level are neither capable nor willing to invest in the peaceful resolution of local conflict. UN peacekeeping operations can contribute to building the capacity of local actors in early warning, mitigation, and response to local conflicts. But efforts by UN peacekeeping operations are likely to prove ineffective where these actors lack the political will to monitor, accompany and enforce local peace agreements and reconciliation processes, and even more so when they are not perceived to be impartial to the conflict or legitimate.

Fourth, while local partnerships are essential to effective engagement with local conflicts, UN peacekeeping operations are occasionally confronted with a dearth of capable or legitimate local partners to lead and "own" these efforts. National and/or local authorities may be indirectly involved in local conflicts, for example by supporting one of the actors who are directly involved. Civil society actors can also become politically affiliated with one of the parties to a local conflict. Moreover, the conflict may also be about competitor over customary authority and power making it extremely challenging for UN peacekeepers looking for local partners to drive mediation and facilitate inter-communal dialogue. In these rare instances, when UN peacekeeping is the only viable presence on the ground and is perceived as being impartial by all parties to the conflict it may need to become the mediator "of last resort".[22]

The opposite can also be true; when a mission's perceived political alignment with the host government generates doubts over its impartiality, it may render UN peacekeeping ill-equipped to support and promote local conflict resolution efforts. With few exceptions, peacekeepers seldom have access to data that can help them understand how they are perceived by the different local stakeholders.

Fifth, in a growing number of settings, UN peacekeeping operations face access restrictions to areas affected by local conflicts. This stems from general insecurity, but also from mobility constraints imposed by the host government or non-state armed groups. Asymmetric threats are also becoming part of an ever more complex operational environment. Status of Forces Agreements (SoFA) offer a critical set of principles to ensure peacekeepers' unimpeded mobility, signed by the host government and alerting the UNSC of potential violations. However, violations rarely translate into sanctions undermining the effectiveness of peacekeeping mission, as frequent examples in Darfur and South Sudan illustrate.

In these cases, humanitarian and civil society actors may more easily engage in specific communities and geographies that remain challenging for UN peacekeeping operations to access. Although UN peacekeeping operations overall maintain the comparative advantage of operating at greater nationwide scale than any other actor, these humanitarian and civil society organizations are critical partners in accessing the communities where local conflicts play out but to which peacekeepers are denied access.

22   Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), "Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peacekeeping operations: Practical Challenges and Tools for the Field", (2016), p. 21

Such partnerships must nevertheless be guided by the paramount importance of preserving humanitarian space, and abiding to the principles of impartiality and do no harm.

A sixth but related challenge to peacekeepers in addressing local conflicts is the complexities of engaging non-state armed groups (NSAGs). While the Secretary General's Executive Committee "reaffirmed the principle that the UN has the prerogative to engage with NSAGs for political purposes as required and appropriate in a given setting, and that engagement never legitimizes NSAGs,"[23] such engagement is nevertheless fraught with complexity and controversy. NSAGs may be influential actors in local conflicts and useful and desirable parties to a political process. There are nevertheless a series of risks of this engagement and inclusion:

• Safety: Risk that UN staff or associates are killed, kidnapped or otherwise harmed by NSAGs.

• Legitimacy: The mission's recognition of NSAGs may afford their leaders legitimacy in a given community, in turn undermining other groups including those that do not use violence in pursuing political objectives.

• Standing: Undermine standing of the UN mediator vis-à-vis the host country's government and / or other relevant parties.

• Potential impacts on national and international frameworks against terrorism.

• Unforeseen consequences: Reprisals against individuals or groups believed to have facilitated or to be involved in dialogue with the UN, or attacks against the UN by other forces in other locations.

• Humanitarian: Engagement may have repercussions on humanitarian actors' programs and services to populations in need.[24]

The tools and frameworks provided in Annex 7 and 8 provide a series of factors for peacekeepers to consider when evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of including armed groups in dialogue, ensuring conflict-sensitive engagement.

Seventh, missions have traditionally lacked financial resources to implement local conflict management activities. Some missions have made creative use of existing financial tools such as QIPs funds and Public Information outreach budgets for these interventions. More recently, several peacekeeping missions have established a dedicated programmatic budget for conflict management interventions, enabling a more structured approach to conflict management. This approach will require a stronger analytical and planning effort by missions, but will also provide the opportunity to make a more lasting contribution to conflict resolution. Nevertheless, funding modalities and administrative rules for disbursement are insufficiently flexible to allow missions to effectively respond to fast-changing realities and needs on the ground.

Results Based Budgeting (RBB) require that activities be defined more than a year in advance. Even then, the actual disbursement of funds is often delayed – weakening the impact of these activities, and building a negative impression in the eyes of external stakeholders and potential partners. Even small-scale vendors are required to cover the up-front cost of services while waiting for disbursement from the mission. These operational and financial obstacles pose a major threat to missions' ability to address local conflicts. In this context, developing strong partnerships with operational partners that have their own resources has proven one of the most effective approaches as demonstrated by UNMISS, where Civil Affairs implemented joint conflict management activities with the USAID-funded NGO Vistas.

And finally, UN peacekeeping operations are not always able to field the right set of skills and expertise needed to engage with local conflicts. The rigidity of recruitment and deployment rules deprives missions of the necessary flexibility to deploy the needed profiles when and where they are needed. The presence of national staff, whose familiarity with the local context and effective understanding of local conflict dynamics is essential, somewhat mitigates this challenge. However, awareness of local dynamics does not automatically result in improved analysis, the capacity to anticipate future trends in local conflicts dynamics, or the ability to design effective interventions to influence those dynamics.

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23   UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) & UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), "Aide Mémoire: Engaging with Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) for Political Purposes: Considerations for UN Mediators and Missions", (2017), p. 1

24   UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) & UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), "Aide Mémoire: Engaging with Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) for Political Purposes: Considerations for UN Mediators and Missions", (2017), p. 7

While some analytical expertise is available within JMACs, it is rarely the case that missions have dedicated mediation and conflict resolution expertise within their ranks and when they do, as is the case in Mali and CAR, these are to support the national political process and not localized conflict resolution processes. While Civil Affairs and other peacekeeping substantive sections may have staff with the required expertise, these individuals are assigned to specific duty station and cannot be easily redeployed. In this context, a greater use of ad-hoc consultancy services or the deployment of Government Provided Personnel (GPP) with the appropriate set of skills and experience – as recommended in 2011 by the Independent Senior Advisory Group report on Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict to Leverage South-South Cooperation[25] - should be considered.

Key points: Challenges to addressing local conflicts

- Local conflicts transcend state borders and are impacted by national and regional conflict drivers
- Limited political will from a government to address local conflicts can limit a peace operation's efforts, particularly regarding capacity-building
- UN peacekeeping operations face access restrictions to some of the regions where violent local conflicts may be a risk
- Conflict management efforts without addressing the structural and root causes of local conflicts are unlikely to have a positive impact in the long-term
- Missions often lack the necessary funds to tackle local conflicts, or are constrained by administrative and budgeting procedures
- Peacekeeping operations have struggled to recruit the specialized context-specific skills required to effectively address local conflicts in a given country or region
- A lack of legitimate, capable local partners to "own" local conflict resolution threatens long-term sustainability

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25   UN Security Council, Independent Senior Advisory Group, "Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict", (2011), p. 7

6.

CONCLUSION

UN peacekeeping operations have demonstrated creativity, innovation and expertise in working to address complex, entrenched local conflicts. Recognition is growing of the threat that local conflicts pose to civilians' security, and of these conflicts' potential to destabilize national peace processes. As this study has highlighted, peacekeepers have pioneered tools and policy interventions that appear to have positively impacted local conflict dynamics – through early warning, mitigation and resolution. The diverse skills of different units, sections and offices across the mission can be leveraged to inform effective multidimensional engagement with local conflicts.

While these local conflicts are often complex, they are neither static nor a product of ancient, inevitable tribal feuds. And while impacted and often compounded by structural factors beyond the control of UN peacekeepers, such as climate change, local conflicts may nevertheless be mitigated and resolved. In the absence of legitimate mechanisms and institutions to resolve local conflicts, the threat of such conflicts yielding violence is high. UN peacekeeping operations can play an important role in reinforcing these mechanisms, and in preventing local conflicts from sparking violence.

Partnerships and coordination with other implementing partners are crucial. Several peacekeeping operations' efforts to address local conflict have benefited from regular coordination, strategic programmatic alignment, and information-sharing with a diverse group of multi-sector partners. "Local ownership" of this local conflict engagement is critical. But when state actors are viewed as illegitimate, or are even involved in enabling or supporting local conflict, this concept becomes challenging for peacekeepers to implement. Building legitimate dispute resolution mechanisms therefore has limitations. Peacekeepers are forced to become local conflict mediators of last resort when such violence threatens peace processes or the security of civilians, but there are no other actors present, capable, or willing to intervene.

In several important areas, UN peacekeeping operations bring a comparative advantage to addressing local conflicts relative to INGOs, civil society actors, and state entities. Peacekeeping operations' political leverage, emanating from Security Council resolutions, and their military forces represent important tools to create situations conducive to inter-communal dialogue, and to protect civilians at risk from local conflicts With superior logistical capabilities than most other actors, and often operating at a greater nationwide scale, UN missions can leverage these capacities to bring communities together and encourage peaceful means of conflict resolution.

Preventing local conflicts is more resource-efficient than merely responding to conflicts once they turn violent. It is also the best strategy to protect civilians, and to prevent local conflicts from harming national peace processes or political dialogue. But for

as long as peacekeepers deprioritize local conflicts, engagement is likely to mainly be limited to responsive interventions after violence erupts.

Cognizant of these challenges, there are nevertheless a series of actions that UN peacekeeping operations can take to more effectively engage with local conflicts. This study proposes a total of eight such recommendations, divided into three thematic sections: sustainability and implementation, programming priorities, and administration.

*   **Recommendation #1:** Invest in efforts to **identify and prevent** violent local conflicts
    A key driver of the limited prioritization of local conflicts is the limited analysis and information that peacekeepers receive on these issues. Putting local conflicts at the center of the work of JMAC and JOC – as MONUSCO has done in the DRC – is crucial to getting the analysis needed for data-driven engagement with local conflicts. There are also opportunities to leverage the quality local conflict analysis of regional actors, such as the African Union, South African Development Community and Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Reinforcing partnerships with local community-based actors is also likely to reinforce and strengthen peacekeepers' access to data on local conflicts to inform identification and prevention. But better analysis alone does not guarantee more effective action from peacekeepers to prevent local conflicts from turning violent. Investment in preventive engagement depends to a large extent upon the UNSC and mission

leadership's prioritization of this issue.

*   **Recommendation #2: Prioritize** which local conflicts to seek to address
    In many country contexts to which peacekeeping operations are deployed, there are many different violent local conflicts. UN peacekeeping operations possess only limited resources, and must use those resources strategically to engage with local conflicts. The Stimson Center's prioritization criteria provide a helpful framework to guide these difficult decisions about which local conflicts to engage as a first priority. MONUSCO's risk assessment framework has yielded hundreds of different local conflicts, but appears to have made it harder, not easier, for mission leadership to secure actionable information on the most concerning local conflicts in the country. The potential of a local conflict to destabilize national-level political processes should be particularly influential in guiding a mission's local conflict engagement strategy.

*   **Recommendation #3:** Partner with local actors to ensure **local ownership** and agency in solving local conflicts
    As discussed above, there are often challenges to ensuring local ownership of efforts to address and engage with local conflicts. However, given the inevitable temporal limits on a UN peace operation's deployment, local ownership is essential – and that UN peacekeepers are mediators of "last resort", as proposed by GPPi, ensuring local owners drive the process in other contexts. UNOCI's

efforts to build a conflict analysis matrix, but ensure its ownership and management by the Ivorian administration offers one example of a largely successful initiative to promote local ownership of strategies to resolve local conflicts. There are often more capable local community-based peacebuilding partners than UN peacekeeping operations are aware of: deepening and widening relationships with these local actors is therefore essential. This is a first step to reinforcing legitimate local conflict resolution mechanisms and institutions that may prevent future local conflicts from yielding violence.

- **Recommendation #4:** Institutionalize a **cross-mission, cross-sector coordinated partnership and strategy** to address local conflicts

  Cross-unit collaboration is critical to UN peacekeeping operations' efforts to address local conflicts. MINUSTAH, the mission in Haiti, has sought to formalize this collaboration across a mission's different units and teams through a single memorandum of understanding (MoU). UNMISS and UNAMID have both worked on developing local conflict engagement strategies. And MINUSCA has developed a strategy that incorporates not only UN actors but INGOs, the Government of CAR and local civil society partners. Such strategies prioritize shared information and understanding to better comprehend the root causes of local conflicts, their drivers, and their relation to national level

conflicts. There needs to be a common vision on what needs to be addressed, how, and to what end. These approaches highlight the importance of a cross-mission, cross-sector partnership and strategy to engage with these drivers of violence.

- **Recommendation #5:** Develop **cross-mission working structures below the level of senior management** to coordinate and strategize on local conflict engagement

  Local conflicts are seldom deemed a priority for UN peacekeepers and their leadership. Participants in this research initiative suggested that coordination mechanisms below the level of senior management, integrating mid-level staff from a mission's different units and offices working on local conflicts, would be a helpful way to ensure sustained attention is paid to local conflicts. Such structures may also facilitate more long-term trend analysis of local conflicts likely to yield violence in the coming decade, rather than merely analyzing the local conflict most likely to yield a violent crisis in the next month. These working structures should not only include mission components but, to the extent possible, also UNCT and other partners working on addressing local conflicts. In Rumbek, South Sudan, for example, Civil Affairs's collaboration with partners led to a realization of duplication of efforts, and to the establishment of a working group to ensure coordination of efforts.

- **Recommendation #6:** Improve the effectiveness of **capacity-building** efforts for addressing local conflicts

  Peacekeepers have not engaged in robust M&E of their efforts to address local conflicts, and so there is little rigorous data about the success of these efforts. However, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that capacity-building efforts led by UN peacekeepers for local actors – such as capacity-building workshops - may have experienced limited success to date in truly empowering and increasing the technical capacity of local actors. More rigorous evaluation of these efforts is a first step to building evidence of "what works" for local capacity-building in local conflict engagement.

- **Recommendation #7: Leverage existing budgeting and financial processes creatively** to facilitate rapid response to local conflicts

  Missions should develop procedures, within existing rules and regulations, to expedite administrative processes, enabling fast-tracked disbursement of funds consistent with the dynamic and explosive nature of local conflicts. This can catalyze more effective and rapid response to emerging local conflicts, and to reduce the threat of harm to civilians. Research has suggested that peacekeepers "understand [UN funding rules and regulations] to be more inflexible than they actually are[26]", and that there may be greater scope than most UN peacekeeping operations realize for budgetary adaptability in responding to changing political and conflict dynamics.

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26   Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), "Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peacekeeping operations: Practical Challenges and Tools for the Field", (2016), p. 20

- **Recommendation #8:** Increase **context-specific recruitment and training of specialized skills to work on local conflict drivers**, prioritizing national staff Standardized job descriptions limit peacekeeping operations' capacity to attract the external talent and specialized skills needed to tackle entrenched local conflicts. Developing specialized job descriptions aligned with a given mission's context and conflict drivers should be considered a priority, as well as investing in existing staff – first and foremost citizens of the host government – to build these skills. National staff are likely to outstay the mission's presence in the country, and can themselves contribute to the launch and effective functioning of legitimate mechanisms and institutions to address local conflicts. In addition, efforts should be made to increase the number of female staff with various skill sets including the ability to reach women at the local level who are often more comfortable working with female staff particularly on sensitive issues related to conflict and violence. Enabling missions to develop staffing tables with diverse functional skills – such as analysts and programme managers within a Political Affairs Section, for example – is critical to fostering greater effectiveness in addressing local conflicts and fostering a cross-mission approach.

Annex 1 – Case study: land tenure local conflict driver, Democratic Republic of Congo

This short case study seeks to explore and evaluate the impact of various policies pursued by the Congolese government upon inter-communal conflict over land tenure in the DRC.

The case study is divided into four sections, considering state efforts to implement and regulate land ownership; to privatize land; and mediate disputes over land ownership. While customary leaders are not agents of the Congolese state, they are the only governing authority in many localities. For this reason, we also consider the actions and interventions of Congolese customary leaders with regards to land ownership. Many analysts regard land tenure disputes to be the primary driver of conflict in the DRC. And, in the country with the second largest area of farming land in the world, effective governance of land ownership is critical to peace and stability.

Section 1: Ineffective state implementation of flawed statutory framework for land tenure

Much of the legislation passed in the wake of the DRC's independence in 1960 with regards to land tenure continues to form the legal basis for which individuals or groups have the formal legal authority to particular tracts of arable land.

When Congo gained independence from the Belgians, the country's first-ever constitution, passed in 1961, recognized

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that a new law would need to be passed to determine the status of pre-independence grants and concessions made under colonial administration.[27] The Bakajika Law, enacted in 1965, was the legislation that sought to do this – much of which remains in force today. The Bakajika Law required holders of grants and concessions to apply to the government for new concessions or tithes,[28] and sought to divide up the rest of Congo's territory between public and private ownership. The Congolese civil servants responsible for drafting the law had "little experience in agricultural or territorial tenure",[29] and as such the Bakajika Law – as well as the 1973

General Property Law – made only few references to traditional or customary land ownership rights, vaguely noting that "rights could apply to land which was occupied or cultivated by local communities."[30] A presidential decree was intended to offer details as to what specific rights could be enjoyed, and in which territories, and by whom, but in more than forty years no president has ever made such a degree.

There is therefore substantial geographic overlap in Congo between "simultaneously competing statutory and customary systems of dividing up land tenure."[31] For any given

27   Buelens, Frans & Frankema, Ewout, "Colonial Exploitation and Economic Development: The Belgian Congo and the Netherlands Indies compared", (2013), p. 104
28   Salacuse, Jeswald, "The National Land Law System of Zaire", (1985), p. 11
29   Ibid, p. 12
30   Buelens, Frans & Frankema, Ewout, "Colonial Exploitation and Economic Development: The Belgian Congo and the Netherlands Indies compared", (2013), p. 108
31   Huggins, Chris, International Alert, "Land, Power and Identity: Roots of Violent Conflict in Eastern DRC", (2010), p. 12

geography in the DRC, a government-issued concession and the word of a customary chief may grant different individuals or groups the official right to the same territory. The Congolese government has failed to develop a legal framework that effectively resolves this dispute, that clearly integrates and reconciles the statutory legal basis and customary traditions of land tenure. The ambiguous and vague language in these different laws has exacerbated tensions over land ownership in the DRC, and indirectly contributed to inter-communal conflict – particularly in the eastern provinces of the country, such as North and South Kivu, where farming land is a source of much inter-ethnic tension and violent confrontation.

Furthermore, limited Congolese state presence beyond major urban centers and limited technical capacity in public administration has resulted in patchy implementation of statutory laws governing land tenure, problematic as they are. The state's "illegitimacy in the eyes of many communities"[32] also reduces the relevance of state legislation governing land tenure, and further increases the potential for inter-communal conflict within a vacuum of effective enforcement of statutory laws.

Section 2: Customary leaders' corruption, patronage and incitement to inter-ethnic violence

Customary leaders, or traditional chiefs, are not formally agents of the Congolese state. They are not employed by, nor do they formally take orders from, the Congolese government. Nevertheless,

these customary leaders often represent "the sole form of governance in many regions of the DRC",[33] particularly given the limited presence of state beyond major urban centers as described in the previous section.

In fact, in many of the DRC's 26 provinces, the role between state and non-state governance actors is somewhat blurred. Surveys have found that "[community members] do not see a stark distinction between state and non-state authority. Rather, they consider for instance that the integration of customary authorities into state administration at the local level is a *de facto* given…".[34] This is often the result of customary leaders themselves claiming legitimacy on the basis of traditional authority, but also on a legal-rational basis given the formal state's limited presence. In many instances, there is therefore somewhat of a "grey zone" between the formal and informal governing authorities in many localities in the DRC.

These traditional chiefs play an active role in distributing land through a system of customary norms but also patronage and corruption in many instances.[35] The disconnect between the DRC's laws and reality on the ground creates conflict between tribal chiefs and the Congolese state itself over this issue, and reduces the possibilities for effective cooperation between formal and informal governing institutions on land tenure issues as a result of mutual distrust and animosity.

Nevertheless, customary leaders have

essentially "privatized"[36] much of the DRC's territory, selling it off to the higher bidder to generate personal revenue. This has sparked dissatisfaction among many communities regarding their customary leaders, and their role in determining land tenure in the DRC. Perceptions of corruption, self-interest and patronage are rife and, while customary leaders are still widely regarded as legitimate, many Congolese hold these chiefs' role in dividing up land in largely critical terms.

Customary leaders are also guilty to a significant degree for having often escalated inter-personal disputes over land tenure to become inter-communal. Many tribal chiefs have manipulated narratives of contrasting "indigenous" and "immigrant" tribes – most frequently Hutu and Tutsi respectively in the Kivus[37] – to strengthen their claim to particular tracts of land and foment violent conflict against perceived foreigners with advantageous land holdings.

Section 3: Privatization of land

Numerous Congolese state efforts to sell public lands to private individuals for profit have had exacerbated tensions between different communities with regards to land tenure and ownership. State interventions as far back as the 1970s, and as recently as 2011, have had a similar destabilizing impact upon the eastern provinces of the country in particular.

Not long after President Mobutu's government had declared state ownership of all land in 1973, DRC

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32   Ibid, p. 16

33   Ibid, p. 16

34   van Leeuwen, Mathijs & van der Haar, Gemma, "Land Governance as an Avenue for Local State Building in Eastern DRC", (2014), p. 24

35   Ibid, p. 18

36   Putzel, James; Lindemann, Stefan; & Schouten, Claire, "Drivers of Change in the DRC: Rise and Decline of the State and Challenges for Reconstruction", (2008), p. 18

37   Vlassenroot, Koen, "South Kivu: Identity, territory, and power in the eastern Congo", (2013), p. 32

(then known as Zaire) faced a series of financial crises. Seeking to quickly generate liquid assets, Mobutu's government engaged in a rapid and large-scale privatization of publicly-owned land in the country.

The Zairean state "did not manage the process in an effective or transparent manner"[38] – and the unequal outcomes of privatization in the late 1970s and continue to impact inter-communal tensions over land ownership today. Certain communities appeared to be privileged under the privatization process, or at least ended up with much more land than they had started with – much of which was reportedly purchased at preferable below-market rates. Wealthy pastoralists in the east of the country in particular profited from this privatization, many of whom were ethnically "Tutsi" and "Rwandaphone foreigners" in the eyes of several other local communities – particularly for Hunde.[39]

This was a highly politicized decision, motivated by Mobutu's desire to ensure the political support of these communities' leaders. And particular individuals amassed enormous tracts of land. While the average land holding in the region was less than one hectare, several Tutsi pastoralists secured fertile grazing land that spanned over one hundred thousand hectares. The reported case of a single individual who, albeit ultimately unsuccessfully, attempted to purchase 230,000 hectares of farming land from the Zairean state gained traction amongst local the communities hostile to this privatization, who felt they had been disadvantaged or that land originally belonging to them had been sold off without their consent to businessmen.

Language in the 2011 agricultural law seeks to protect the DRC from falling victim to "land grabs" by foreign corporations that have purchased swathes of farming land in many other countries in the region, often against the will of the peoples living in those areas. Any agricultural business owning Congolese territory may only have foreign ownership up to 49% of the company, and foreigners therefore cannot have a majority stake in any agricultural enterprise in the DRC under the provisions of the law.[40] This legislation, considered draconian by many foreign investors seeking to invest in the DRC's immense agricultural potential, has yet to be implemented in practice despite having been approved by the assembly and senate in December 2011, over five years ago. If lobbyists in Kinshasa are able to persuade lawmakers to rewrite this article to be more conducive to foreign investment before the law is even implemented, there is potential that farming land already contested by multiple groups will be sold off by the state to foreign investors. This state intervention would likely further escalate inter-communal conflicts over land ownership in the DRC.

Section 4: Failure of state-led mediation of land tenure disputes

The Government of DRC's stated commitment to be more actively engaged in mediating conflict over land ownership in the country has not yet translated into meaningful action or impactful policy interventions.

The 2011 agricultural law, mentioned in the previous section of this case study, contains an explicit provision for the state to mediate disputes over land tenure.[41] Yet, the language on this is vague and abstract and provides little direct instructions on how the Congolese state might be seized of this matter through policy intervention. The wider 2011 agricultural law has yet to be implemented, and as such this rhetoric has yet to be translated into policy in any meaningful way.

The Congolese government's Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for the East, or STAREC, contains provisions for state agents to more actively engage in land rights conflict in the east of the country. These provisions were institutionalized through the STAREC's creation of a series of Permanent Local Conciliation Committees, or CLPCs, established to consider land issues and attempt to mediate conflict.

But concerns persist that the CLPCs and their staff have "limited previous exposure to these technical issues of land tenure,"[42] and often are not representative of local communities in gender or ethnic terms. Analysts have highlighted the risk that CLPC agents, choked of administrative resources, are liable to be influenced by external stakeholders in individual cases, affecting their impartiality and ability to provide fair and balanced decision-making in adjudicating these disputes.

These challenges are not unique to the CLPCs and apply to the wider Congolese justice system, which also faces

38   Putzel, James; Lindemann, Stefan; & Schouten, Claire, "Drivers of Change in the DRC: Rise and Decline of the State and Challenges for Reconstruction", (2008), p. 22

39   Vlassenroot, Koen, "South Kivu: Identity, territory, and power in the eastern Congo", (2013), p. 26

40   Ganson, Brian & Wenmman, Achim, "Business and Conflict in Fragile States: The Case for Pragmatic Solutions", (2016), p. 101

41   Nachmany, Michael, "Climate Change Legislation in the Democratic Republic of Congo", (2015), p. 4

42   Huggins, Chris, International Alert, "Land, Power and Identity: Roots of Violent Conflict in Eastern DRC", (2010), p. 16

challenges of corruption and inefficacy in the face of limited financial resources. This threatens the ability of the state to effectively mediate disputes over land tenure, and likely harms the interests of marginalized and less powerful groups with claims to land ownership – including returning refugees and internally displaced persons.

Annex 2 – Template: Local conflict mapping and risk assessment

This risk assessment tool is intended to guide a cross-mission response and strategic engagement with local conflicts. Each column represents a separate analytical process, conducted by different units and thematic sections within the mission. For example, JMAC is responsible for determining the

"risk level" of a particular local conflict, while JOC triangulates the geographic locations where outbreaks of violence are most likely. Civil Affairs contributes knowledge on potential triggers of violence. This combines to inform the final column, "recommended actions", leveraging the diverse insights and expertise of different units across the peace operation.

| Risk level (red, yellow, green)	Conflict parties	Geographic location	Key events and trends	Primary conflict issues (root causes, proximate causes)	Influencers (positive and negative)	Potential triggers	Actual impact and trends	Potential impact – short and long-term	Recommended actions, roles & responsibilities, progress indicators
Likelihood x potential impact	Actor mapping	Map	Timeline of key events	Iceberg model	Connectors and dividers	Early warning indicators	Human rights reports	JMAC trend analyses and scenarios	Mission action plans (local level)
JMAC	Civil Affairs	JOC	JOC	Civil Affairs	Civil Affairs Political Affairs DDR JMAC	Civil Affairs JMAC	Human Rights	JMAC; Civil Affairs; Political Affairs; POC; Child & Women Protection	JOC (operational planning team) Civil Affairs

## Annex 3 – Case study: Local conflict dashboard visualization in Gao, Mali

MINUSMA has developed a data-driven dashboard on violence in Mali, leveraging data collected by JMAC on the number of conflict incidents and trends within the Gao region. It also provides monthly data on different types of conflict – for example, over land – between different groups in Gao.

## Annex 4 – Template: Reporting on inter-communal conflict

A. Identify your audience (Mission colleagues, Mission Senior Leadership, UNHQ):

   a. Why are you communicating:
   i.   To inform
   ii. To request support
   iii. To call for action

B. Identify what needs to be communicated:

   a. Context / background to what is being reported (trend)
   b. Impact and implications of what is being reported
   c. Action taken by Mission components and sections
   d. Impact of action taken
   e. Action proposed for the Mission, UNHQ, the Security Council etc.
   f. Overall way forward: Outstanding challenges and risks

C. Principles for communication

   a. Clear
   b. Concise
   c. Brief
   d. Report on outcomes and outputs – not activities
   e. Report on aggregate Mission impact – not on a component or section specific basis

Snapshot of inter- and intra community conflicts in Gao region/15 June 2016/ CAD

Types of conflicts, priority levels and trends in Gao region

Types of cc per location in Gao region

Gao region, cc types (overall %)
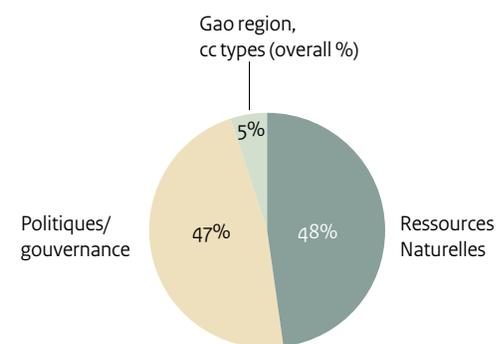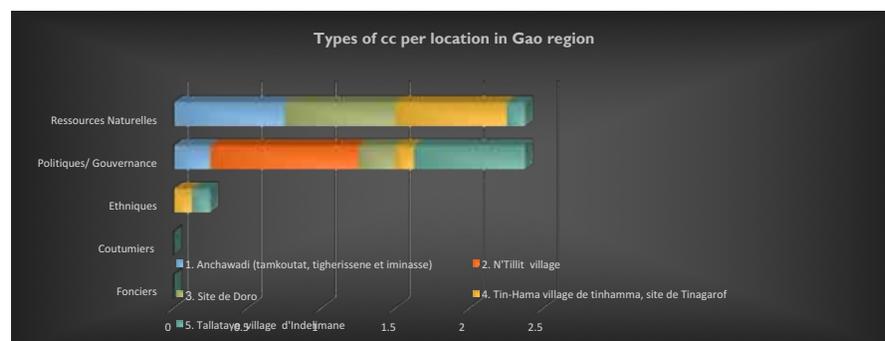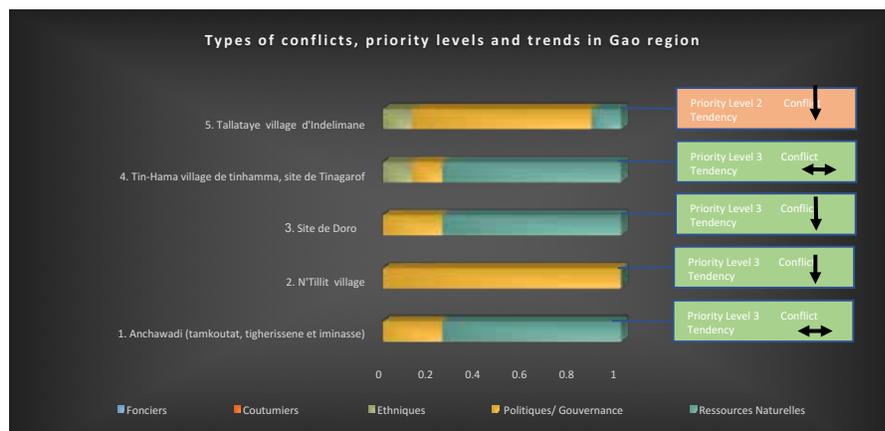
1. Conflict autour des paturages, des points d'eaux at vol de betail entre les communautés imghad, peul et arabe.
2. Conflit intra-communautaire entre deux camps imghads (selon leur appartenance; Gatia versus MNLA) ; gestion politique et leadership du village d'Intililt,
3. Conflit entre les commuanautés songhoi et imghad, tous les deux favorables à la Plateforme; le vol des animaux et le vol des motos (type Saneli) s'est beaucoup accentué.
4. Conflit entre les communautés imghad, idourfane, daoussak, kelgounhane et autres minorités peul, arabe lie à la transhumance dans les zones d'Amalawlaw, Tagarangabot, Tinhamma, Tintafaghat, Inalakam et Tindigmatane.
5. Conflict entre les Daoussaks proches du HCUA et MNLA contre imghad et idourfanes proches du GATIA. Toute la zone de Tallataye; gestion politique et leadership

Annex 5.1 – Framework: Monitoring and evaluating conflict management efforts

Proposed (outcome) Prevention	Original (output / outcome)
No. and proportion of interventions that effectively defuse tensions	No. of successful interventions to defuse tensions
Proportion of people reporting an improved level of trust in other social groups	No. of peace campaigns conducted
No. and proportion of [communities] where functioning community alert mechanisms are in place	No. of functioning community alert/policing mechanisms established
Number of violent inter-communal incidents associated with seasonal migration	No. of dialogue forums held for farmer and nomadic herder communities
Mitigation	
No. and proportion of inter-communal cessation of hostilities agreements that are holding more than 6 / 12 months after their adoption	No of cessation of hostilities agreements signed
Number of early warning alerts received by the host Government and the mission respectively	Extent of timely intervention put in place by authorities and traditional leaders (creation of buffer zones, rapid deployment of forces to prevent escalation; active engagement of key stakeholders including state authorities)
Proportion of early warning alerts that are responded to in a timely manner	
Resolution	
No. and proportion of mediation and dialogue processes that result in an inter-communal peace agreement	No. of mediation and dialogue processes initiated
No. and proportion of reconciliation processes where community members report an increased level of confidence in the other group upon conclusion	No. of reconciliation processes successfully completed
No. and proportion of provisions to address root causes that are implemented	No. of reconciliation agreements that address the root causes
Average no. of times inter-communal peace agreements are violated	No. of times a conflict between two parties recurred after signing an agreement
No. and proportion of inter-communal peace agreements that are violated within the first 6 / 12 months	
No and proportion of provisions where implementation is on track	No. of follow-up mechanisms established
No. and proportion of projects implemented that are conflict sensitive	No. of tangible projects implemented to specifically address inter-communal tensions

Annex 5.2 – Framework: Monitoring and evaluating conflict management efforts

The following framework offers a series of indicators by which to measure the degree to which violence associated with inter-communal conflict reduces, and the extent to which local actors' capacities to address inter-communal violence are enhanced. While such indicators do not provide evidence of causal effect of a UN peace operation's efforts causing a reduction in this violence or an increase in capacity, they nevertheless provide valuable analytical information about a given local conflict and its dynamics.

I: Violence associated with inter-communal conflict is reduced

Decrease in the recorded number of civilians killed as a result of inter- and intra-communal violence per 100,000 population.

Decrease in the number of incidents of inter- and intra-communal violence.

Decrease in the number and proportion of inter- and intra-communal disputes that result in violence.

Increase in the number and proportion of people who express an improved level of trust toward members of other social groups per 100,000 population.

II: Local capacities to address inter-communal violence are enhanced

Increase in the number of initiatives to address inter- and intra-communal conflict that are being implemented by national and sub-national governments.

Increase in the number and proportion of inter-communal disputes that are referred dispute resolution mechanisms (traditional/informal or institutionalized/formal)

Increase in the number and proportion of disputes that are settled peacefully through dispute resolution mechanisms (traditional/informal or institutionalized/formal)

Increase in the number and proportion of [counties] where women make up at least 30% of active members in dispute resolution and/or justice mechanisms (traditional/informal or institutionalized/formal) and have appropriate influence over proceedings.

Increase in the proportion of [communities] where effective community based early warning / alert systems are in place.

Increase in the number and proportion of local early warning mechanisms where women make up at least 30% of active members.

Annex 6.1 – Case Study: MINUSCA flashpoint matrix for prioritizing POC action

The following flashpoint matrix has been developed by MINUSCA to prioritize how and where the mission should prioritize protection of civilian engagement. While, as this study has shown, peacekeepers are obliged to protect civilians in the face of violence regardless of the source of the threat, resources are inevitably limited and prioritization is critical. Such a framework enables MINUSCA to assess the degree of threat, the level of a community's vulnerability, the presence of protection actors, and the resilience of the local community to threat or use of violence.

Threats	Vulnerabilities	Protection actors	Resilience factors
Presence and number of non-state armed groups (Y=1 ; N=0 ; more than 1 group=2)	Presence of communities at risk (IDPs, minorities, enclaves) (Y=1 ; N=0)	Presence of international security forces (Y=0 ; N=1)	Presence of local conflict management mechanisms (Y=0 ; N=1)
Frequent activities, including incidents of armed violence) by non-state armed groups (Y=1 ; N=0)	Number of inhabitants in the affected area, who are exposed to violence (< 1,000=1 ; > 1,000=2)	Presence of humanitarian actors / delivery of humanitarian assistance (Y=0 ; N=1)	Presence of justice institutions (Y=0 ; N=1)
Number of casualties (disaggregated by social group) (1-10=1 ; >10=2)	Presence of an inter-communal conflict (Y=1 ; N=0)	Presence of operational national security and defence forces (Y=0 ; N=1)	Freedom of movement for the civilian population in the area (Y=0 ; N=1)

Annex 6.2 – Case Study: MONUSCO risk assessment framework

Similarly in the DRC, MONUSCO has developed a framework to assess the magnitude and nature of the threat of violence against civilians. The aim of this framework is to guide prioritization: to know which local conflict drivers are most likely to produce the most significant threat to the wellbeing and security of civilians.

Extent/scope	Intensity	Escalation	Threat level	Duration	Complexity
Located in an isolated area	Interruption in communication between parties	Hardening of the positions of the parties	Size of the affected population (displacement or physical violence)	Conflict stretches over a long period of time and involves numerous violent incidents and community clashes	Conflict dynamics involve two or more issues (making it difficult to categorize the source)
Expansion of the circle of influential actors involved	Destruction of property and/or community infrastructure	Increase in the level of violence	Restrictions of movement and/or access to community services for a specific group	Cyclical repetition of violent incidents and community clashes	Interference or influence by key actors such as politicians, military figures etc.
Expansion of conflict to other areas	Use of knives and/or fire arms	Existence of a structured leadership within one or both parties	Straining of inter-communal cohabitation	Conflict persists despite attempts to address it	Blockage of conflict management mechanisms
Increased visibility and media coverage	Civilian casualties	Frequency of repetition of violations			Regular changes in the interlocutors for the conflict parties

1.   Analysis of the context

- Is the decision to intervene based on a conflict analysis that assesses the conflict context but also sheds light on parties' relationships, interests, power and positions?

- Have connectors and dividers been identified and has the team developed strategies to empower connectors and mitigate dividers?

- Are parties 'ripe' for a mediation process, or what measures can be taken to ripen the conflict?

- Has there been a thorough analysis of actors involved and their respective underlying motivations?

- Is the analysis made subject to frequent adjustments according to developments on the ground?

2.   Understanding the interaction between intervention and context

Mediation team

- Can the mediation team commit to a long-term engagement and does it dispose of the necessary resources?

- Do the team members have the required expertise and can the team bring in external expertise if needed?

- Is the team familiar with the standards of conflict sensitivity and its implications?

- How can the different actors supporting the peace process coordinate their activities?

Parties

- Is the mediation team and the process perceived as impartial by the conflict parties?

- Which factors could contribute to the parties' perception of the mediation team and/or process as partial?

Process

- How can the process account for the largest possible array of views and priorities without jeopardizing the attainment of an agreement?

- Which actors should be included in the process in order to provide the process with legitimacy and local ownership and make the resulting agreement sustainable?

3.   Adaptation and learning

At the outset…

- Is there a clearly formulated 'theory of change' on which the intervention is based

- What are the overall objectives, what preconditions are required to achieve them and what activities will bring about these preconditions?

- What are implicit assumptions and have they been made explicit?

- What elements present a potential risk and what preventive actions could help to mitigate them?

During and after…

- Are activities continuously evaluated regarding their potential for doing harm?

- Have the desired changes materialized?

- What lessons can be derived from the experiences made?

- Are the formulated assumptions critically assessed and adjusted on a regular basis?

- In case an objective has not been met, what changes to activities or underlying assumptions need to be made in order for the objective to be met?

Source: Swisspeace (2014)

Annex 8 – Framework: Conflict sensitivity checklist

	General
✓	A preliminary conflict analysis has taken place
✓	The voices of the most vulnerable groups have been heard
✓	The process of design has been inclusive and participatory
✓	The proposed outcomes are not likely to generate tensions and disagreements
✓	Possible unintended negative impacts generated by the intervention have been considered
✓	The intervention does not erode existing livelihood or coping strategies
	Choice of partners
✓	Conflicting interests and perspectives within potential partners/other stakeholders are not likely to be a source of tensions
✓	The exclusion of any interested institution is not likely to become a source of tensions
✓	No partners are perceived as involved in the conflict
✓	The selected implementing partners apply the "do no harm" principle
	Choice of geographic area
✓	The selection process has been sufficiently clear, transparent and inclusive of the viewpoints of key stakeholders (taking into account possible spoilers)
✓	The selection of any specific territory is not likely to be a source of tension and disagreement among certain stakeholders and groups
✓	There is a good understanding of the conflict dynamics, connectors and dividers in the selected geographic area(s)
	Choice of beneficiaries
✓	There is no evidence that one or more groups perceive lack of transparency and fairness in the distribution of project benefits
✓	The selection of beneficiaries has been done in a transparent way
✓	AN analysis has been made as to whether the selected beneficiaries participate or not in the conflict, have any influence over it, or are influenced by conflict themselves
✓	A necessary degree of motivation in the beneficiaries in participating in the proposed initiatives has been observed
	Alternative strategies
✓	Alternative strategies have been duly considered
✓	The decision-making process has been transparent, participatory, and sensitive to the conflict dynamics
✓	The final strategy chosen has been deemed the most conflict sensitive on the basis of the preliminary conflict analysis
✓	The selected strategy is coherent with respect to ongoing national programmes and strategies for relief, transition and development
✓	The selected strategy includes specific conflict mitigation measures to reduce tensions
	Dividers and connectors
✓	The intervention does not target only specific clans/groups and marginalize others
✓	Traditional leadership structures and customs are being respected across the decision making process
✓	Interventions provide balanced benefits for all generations, thus avoiding cross-generational tensions
✓	The intervention provides incentives for those individuals and institutions who promote peace and who are able and willing to collaborate with their antagonist counterparts
	Gender
✓	The conflict analysis has incorporated a gender perspective to assess roles, relations, needs and priorities
✓	Any data presented or statistical information analysed has been disaggregated by sex and age
✓	The intervention promotes dialogue and builds on work of women's groups
✓	The intervention makes sure that it does not increase women's vulnerability in any possible way

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