

Literature Review

Community Engagement: Concepts, Guidelines, and Recommendations

PAX Protection of Civilians Program
Engaging International Actors Project
Ali Maleki, January 2021



Contents

Contents.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Acronyms.....	4
1. Community Engagement: Conceptual definitions.....	5
2. Community Engagement: Conceptual documents	8
Entry 1: Henigson (2020). Community Engagement in UN Peacekeeping Operations: A People-Centered Approach to Protecting Civilians.....	8
Entry 2: United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (2020). United Nations Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.....	12
Entry 3: Fast (2018). Crossing boundaries in protecting civilians: Mapping actors, insights and conceptual spaces.....	14
Entry 4: Rupesinghe (2016). How can peacekeepers strengthen their engagement with local communities? Opportunities and Challenges in the field.	16
Entry 5: Rupesinghe (2016). Community Engagement: softening the hard edge of stabilization	18
Entry 6: Webb & Hogg (2016). Humanitarian Engagement with Non-State Armed Groups: Eliciting the Voices of Civilians in Armed Conflict.....	20
3. Community Engagement: Operational documents	22
Entry 7: United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2019). The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook.....	22
Entry 8: CDAC Network (2019). Collective Communication and Community Engagement in humanitarian action: How-to Guide for Leaders and Responders	25
Entry 9: Niederberger (2018). An Introduction to Community Engagement in WASH	27
Entry 10: Humanitarian Response (2018). Humanitarian Country Team: Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan for North-East Nigeria.....	29
Entry 11: HHI & ICRC (2018). Engaging with People Affected by Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence.....	31
Entry 12: UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2017). Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Training Materials for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.....	34
Entry 13: Niederberger, Ferron & O'Reilly (2016). Guide to Community Engagement in WASH	36
4. Community Engagement: Commentaries & case-specific analyses.....	43
Entry 15: UN OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division (2019). Evaluation of the contribution of the UNMISS Civil Affairs Division to the reduction of local conflict in South Sudan.....	43

Entry 16: Van der Merwe & Langa (2019). South Africa’s Community Work Program: Local Peacebuilding Innovation Within a National Developmental Architecture.....	45
Entry 17: Spink (2018). Protection with Less Presence: How the Peacekeeping Operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo is Attempting to Deliver Protection with Fewer Resources	47
Concluding reflections on Community Engagement	49
Annex A.....	50
Annex B.....	51
Annex C.....	52
Annex D	53
Annex E.....	54

Introduction

Objective

This literature review aims to provide an overview of publications that address the concept and practice of Community Engagement (CE) in conflict- and crisis-affected contexts. The objective of this review is to garner existing engagement concepts, guidelines and tools, their shortcomings, and current field-based recommendations for a practice- and people-centered approach in engaging with local communities during peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. For internal users, the review serves as a baseline, explorative study on the recent concepts, guides, and tools that are currently used. For external users, the documents may be a useful document to identify and introduce the main ideas and approaches to CE. Both internal and external users may use the document to gain insights from previous recommendations on the promises and pitfalls of CE.

Scope

This literature review is limited to:

- publications dating from 2016 to 2020;
- CE guidelines and tools currently used by the United Nations (UN) and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations;
- research articles, reports, policy briefs, and commentaries.

Organization

First, this literature review presents the various definitions of CE that are used across the entry documents with the purpose of informing the reader about the multiple interpretations of the CE concept. Second, the review will detail entries of both essays and documents concerning the concept of CE and its applications. Subsequently, an overview of reports will be presented that consider the practical operationalization of the CE concept in guidelines and best practice documents. The final section will elaborate on documents that have primarily focused on single case analyses and documents that provide commentary on the practices of CE. All entries are structured according to the date of publication, starting with the most recent.

Acronyms

CAD	Civil Affairs Division
CAN	Community Alert Network
CE/AAP WG	Community Engagement and Accountability to Affected People Working Group
CLA	Community Liaison Assistant
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DPO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HPC	Humanitarian Program Cycle
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Cell
JPT	Joint Protection Team
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
NSAG	Non State Armed Group
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ORC	Office of the Resident Coordinator
OSRSG	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General
PoC	Protection of Civilians
QIP	Quick Impact Project
RC	Resident Coordinator
UN	United Nations
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Health

1. Community Engagement: Conceptual definitions

Definition 1: United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (2020). United Nations Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding.

- “A strategic process to directly involve local populations in all aspects of decision-making and implementation to strengthen local capacities, community structures and local ownership as well as to improve transparency, accountability and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings. In the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, community engagement is generally done through partnerships with a broad range of local civil society actors as intermediaries who work in the sphere of peacebuilding.”

Definition 2: Rupesinghe (2016). How can peacekeepers strengthen their engagement with local communities? Opportunities and Challenges in the field.

- “[For] communities [to] play an active role in decision-making, implementation, assessment and monitoring; and go on to map out the potential role of communities at each of these junctures. Three core engagement goals are specified. The first is communication, to ensure that communities receive the information necessary for self-organization. The second is consultation, to enable the sharing of perspectives, grievances, needs and priorities, which can then become key data for decision-making and evaluation. The third is empowerment, to facilitate the direct involvement of local peoples in decision-making.”

Definition 3: Webb & Hogg (2016). Humanitarian Engagement with Non-State Armed Groups: Eliciting the Voices of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

- “[Community] engagement as the following concepts: providing information about a given situation and response; two-way communication; direct involvement and consultations with crisis-affected people; and accountability frameworks and participatory processes. ‘Community-based’ and ‘partnership’ may also qualify as engagement, depending on the power relations between the larger organization, the partner organization and civilians.”

Definition 4: Niederberger & Knight (2019). An Introduction to Community Engagement in WASH.

- “Community engagement in WASH is a planned and dynamic process to connect communities and other emergency response stakeholders to increase community’s control over the impact of the response. It brings together the capacities and perspectives of communities and responders. Effective community engagement encompasses other

sectors and response teams within Oxfam and across the humanitarian sector more broadly.”

Definition 5: CDAC Network (2019). Collective Communication and Community Engagement in humanitarian action.

- “Community engagement is an area of humanitarian action based on the principle of communication. It gives priority to sharing life-saving, actionable information with people affected by disaster using two-way communication channels so aid providers listen to and act on people’s needs, suggested solutions, feedback and complaints, and people receiving assistance have a say in and lead decisions that affect them. It also prioritizes keeping people in crisis connected with each other and the outside world.”

Definition 6: Humanitarian Response (2018). Humanitarian Country team: Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan for North-East Nigeria.

- “Community engagement is the programmatic field of work through which humanitarian organizations can improve their effectiveness and achieve AAP. It includes three operational components or approaches: two-way information provision or communication, feedback/complaints mechanisms, and community participation. It is a cross-cutting programmatic component, similar to protection or the humanitarian-development nexus (and indeed relevant to the achievement of progress in both).”

Definition 7: Spink (2017). ‘Let Us Be a Part of It’ Community Engagement by the UN Peacekeeping mission in South Sudan.

- “The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has defined community engagement as “a two-way dialogue between crisis affected communities, humanitarian organizations, and, where possible, within and between communities.” According to OCHA it involves elements of “participation, feedback and complaints, and providing information” and should “enable affected people to meet their different needs, address their vulnerabilities, and build on their pre-existing capacities.””

Definition 8: Harvard Humanitarian Initiative & ICRC (2018). Engaging with People Affected by Armed Conflicts and Other Situations of Violence.

- “Community engagement: For the ICRC, community engagement is closely linked to its desire to work in close proximity to the local community. It is the process of, and commitment to, providing life-saving, useful and actionable information to communities

(information-as-aid). It is also the process of using or establishing two-way communication channels to listen to people's needs, concerns, capacities, solutions, feedback and complaints, partnering with the community to ensure that it can actively participate and guide the ICRC's humanitarian action."

2. Community Engagement: Conceptual documents

Entry 1: Henigson (2020). Community Engagement in UN Peacekeeping Operations: A People-Centered Approach to Protecting Civilians.

Title Community Engagement in UN Peacekeeping Operations: A People-Centred Approach to Protecting Civilians.

Author Harley Henigson

Associated organization International Peace Institute

Publication date November 2020

Link to document [Henigson CE UNPO Link - PDF](#)

Type of literature Research Paper

Focus of the publication

This International Peace Institute (IPI) research paper analyses the conceptual and practical shift toward a people-centered, community engagement approach to Protection of Civilians (PoC) in peacekeeping contexts. The document examines the positive implications and impact of this approach, as well as the challenges and risks it can pose for both communities and for missions. Drawing on best practices as well as non-United Nations (UN) and UN unarmed approaches to community engagement and PoC, Henigson puts forward recommendations for the UN Secretariat, the four largest peacekeeping operations, and UN member states on the Security Council. The report mainly draws on desk research, remote interviews, the author's in-country research and experience working with a humanitarian NGO in South Sudan, and input from participants in a virtual roundtable in September 2020. For an understanding of the rationale for community engagement in UN peacekeeping missions, see **Annex A** (p. 4-6).

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- **Awareness raising, information sharing, and relationship building** activities currently used by civilian, military, and police components of the four largest peacekeeping missions (MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, and UNMISS). For a brief overview of the main activities of each component, see **Annex B**
 - The **civilian component**, or Civil Affairs section, holds meetings with local communities to ensure that communities understand the mission's work and role, and build relationships at the local level. The civilian section also supports the communications and public information division in sensitizing communities on the mission's mandates and activities (p. 8).

- The **military component** usually engages with community members in hotspot areas in an informal manner during dismounted patrols, aiming to sensitize them on the mission mandate. These dismounted patrols project a more visible and approachable presence than vehicle patrols and have “immense protective effects” for civilians (p. 12). Also, the dismounted patrols make it easier to build and maintain trust at the community level and to gather contextual and situational information (p. 12).
 - The **police component** centralizes community engagement through dismounted patrols and sensitizing the local population of the mission’s mandate and activities (p. 9). In aiming to prevent and change the conditions that lead to criminality, UN police forces are only effective in this regard when the approach is grounded in a two-way communication that builds mutual trust, fosters transparency, manages expectations, and helps the mission understand existing protection mechanisms (p. 13).
- **Information and peacekeeping-intelligence gathering, and analysis** activities currently used by civilian, military, and police components of the four largest peacekeeping missions (MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, and UNMISS). For a brief overview of the main activities of each component, see **Annex B**.
 - The **civilian component** gathers information from *community-alert network* focal points; discussions with community members led by *community liaison assistants* during military patrols; and gathers information on *communities’ protections concerns* and *self-protection capacities* (p. 9). This information gathering is done through Joint Protection Teams (JPTs). Community liaison assistants (CLAs) also play a crucial role in gathering information and peacekeeping-intelligence through their relationships with local communities, management of the community alert networks (CANs), language skills, and contextual and cultural understanding (p. 10).
 - The **military component**, during patrols, together with CLAs, has the opportunity to speak with community members to gather contextual and situational information. Military personnel use this information to plan its PoC activities (p. 12). Also, the military component uses ad hoc female engagement teams to ensure engagement with a cross-section of the local community members (p. 13).
 - The **police component** has meetings with community members in urban areas and camps for refugees and internally displaced persons to gather information. Also, information gathering happens through local contacts and national police networks.

- **Conflict resolution and reconciliation and community-level peacebuilding** activities currently used by civilian, military, and police components of the four largest peacekeeping missions (MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, and UNMISS). For a brief overview of the main activities of each component, see **Annex B**.
 - The **civilian component** works with influential community members, local authorities, civil society and religious groups, and vulnerable populations to understand and support local conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts (p. 10). These conflict resolution efforts take the form of *meeting or discussions between or within communities*, while reconciliation efforts are part of *longer-term support to community-level peacebuilding*. These conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts also involve *strengthening traditional justice mechanisms, improving access to justice for marginalized populations, and building capacity of civil society and community-based organizations* (p. 10).
 - The **military component** primarily supports local conflict-resolution and reconciliation efforts by conducting patrols prior to and during activities carried out by and in coordination with the civilian sections (p. 13). Force personnel also supports quick-impact projects in coordination with the civilian sector. Furthermore, military personnel facilitate dialogue between host-state security forces and local communities (p. 9).
 - The **police component** fosters and initiates efforts to build community-level trust in the national police; supports local conflict mediation efforts; and builds capacity to strengthen community members' self-protection measures (p. 9). However, their engagement is complicated by their coordination with and support to host-state law enforcement agencies. Conducting joint activities with national police and building their capacity can reduce violence perpetrated by the host state against civilians and ensure that national police are responsive to threats to civilians at the community level. But this can also undermine the UN police's relationship with the local communities (p. 14).

Overarching recommendations

- The UN Security Council should continue to refine the language on community engagement in upcoming mandates for MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, and UNMISS.
- Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO) and the Integrated Training Service should expand the community engagement modules in the updated Core Pre-deployment Training Materials.
- DPO's Office of Military Affairs should consider requiring troop-contributing countries to train their forces on conducting dismounted patrols.
- DPO's Office of Military Affairs should continue to develop policy, guidance, best practices, and training materials on engagement platoons.

- DPO and the Policy Evaluation and Training Division (DPET), in conjunction with the four largest peacekeeping operations, should consider ways to optimize the use and management of community liaison assistants (CLAs).
- DPO and DPET should continue to explore where unarmed civilian protection practices could complement the community engagement efforts of UN peacekeeping operations.

Concluding remarks

Henigson's research paper lucidly illustrates the current activities of the civil, military, and police components in four of the largest UN peacekeeping operations. The paper clearly describes and analyses the current policy and practice trend in community engagement initiatives within UN peacekeeping operations. The inclusion of military and police components are very welcome and contribute substantially to the paper's relevance and conceptual and practical scope of application. This document will help humanitarian, military, and developmental practitioners gain further comprehension of current community engagement activities done by the largest UN peacekeeping missions. Although the sole focus on UN peacekeeping missions might be regarded as a shortcoming, actors involved in different operational contexts can gather important insights into relevant community engagement challenges and opportunities for their organization and in their specific context.

Entry 2: United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (2020). United Nations Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

Title UN Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

Author UN Peacebuilding Support Office

Associated organization United Nations

Publication date May 2020

Link to document [UN CE Guidelines Link – PDF](#)

Type of literature Guidelines report

Focus of the publication

The guidelines and definitions in this report are intended to support UN field operations at the country-level to develop country-specific community engagement strategies. These strategies are guided by a human rights-based approach and the key principles of conflict-sensitivity. These guidelines are to be understood in conjunction with broader UN system-wide initiatives to bring more coherence to the UN's approach towards civic space. The objectives of this report are to:

- Support UN field presences in developing country-specific community engagement strategies on peacebuilding and sustaining peace; and
- Provide operational guidance to UN field presences on how to more effectively engage with civil society actors at the local level in peacebuilding and sustaining peace (p. 4).

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- In relation to the first recommendation in the report, it is deemed important for the UN to regularly conduct a gendered conflict-sensitive and risk-informed joint **community contextual analysis** and mapping of local civil society actors (see **Annex C**) to assess the latest peacebuilding needs and priorities (pp. 8-9). To accommodate community-specific contexts, UN entities should maintain operational flexibility and put in place risk mitigation strategies (p. 10).
- The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (OSRSG), the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG), or the Resident Coordinator (RC) and her or his Office (ORC) should play a proactive role to streamline and coordinate sustainable community engagement across UN entities at the country level.
- To ensure operational and strategic coherence amongst the relevant UN entities in the country a **joint UN-civil society standing body** can also be an effective vehicle for improving targeted communication, training, and knowledge management at both the national and local levels. Based on the **community contextual analysis**, a designated civil society engagement actor should create a **comprehensive and centralized database on civil society** (p. 11).

- When conducting the **contextual analysis and mapping**, “it is important to note **context-specific protection needs as well as key safety and protection issues that can make genuine progress through constructive initiatives** with national and local authorities” (p. 12).

Overarching recommendations

- Deeper understanding of local context through respectful, coherent and flexible engagement.
- Creating operational and strategic coherence and effective coordination in community engagement across the UN in the field.
- Ensuring safety and protection for local communities in restricted environments through conflict-sensitive and risk-informed approaches.
- Inclusive and meaningful participation of local civil society actors within civil affairs divisions of UN missions.
- Community-based capacity-building, including financing for peacebuilding.
- Meaningful participation of local woman and woman civil society actors in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.
- Meaningful youth engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the local level.

Concluding remarks

The UN Peacebuilding Support Office (UNPO) has done well to put forward a document detailing the concept of community engagement in peace operations from a UN organizational perspective. The definitions, guidelines and recommendations suggested in this document will aid UN missions, programs and teams to position their community engagement activities with an operational framework that is supported and created by the UNPO. Especially the emphasis on strategic coherence and effective coordination is extremely important for various UN missions and Civil Affairs departments. However, as the document has been published in May 2020, it raises questions about why the UNPO did not devise such guidelines and recommendations earlier. Particularly when the UN strives for a people-centered approach to peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Community engagement with local civil society actors can be understood as one of the cornerstones of sustainable peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Community engagement is an important and dynamic process and thus should involve actors from the security, humanitarian and development sectors. It can be argued that this key tripartite interrelation should have been stressed slightly stronger in this document. Additionally, the UN document should have elaborated more on the ways community engagement can be done with regards to sensitivity and anonymity in complex conflict situations to make the do-no-harm approach in peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions more practice-oriented.

Entry 3: Fast (2018). Crossing boundaries in protecting civilians: Mapping actors, insights and conceptual spaces

Title Crossing boundaries in protecting civilians: Mapping actors, insights and conceptual spaces

Author Larissa Fast

Associated organization Humanitarian Policy Group

Publication date 2018

Link to document [Fast Working Paper - PDF](#)

Type of literature Working paper

Focus of the publication

This paper is explicitly focused on exploring and crossing “the invisible boundaries that characterize protection discourse and practice, particularly regarding ‘local’ protection.” It seeks to explore the benefits and challenges of local protection and aims to identify the intersections between various protections actors and approaches, especially in terms of their proceedings amongst and with local populations. The desk-research is guided by the following four questions:

- How do local actors understand and implement protection?
- How do boundaries and borders change protection, particularly local protection?
- How do cognate fields incorporate or build upon local protection?
- How might we more effectively operationalize local understandings of protection to achieve better outcomes?

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- In the face of violence and conflict, civilians and local communities are not idle. They possess agency and take a range of measures to organize and protect themselves in the face of threats. In this regard, “civilian self-protection strategies seek to avoid, contain or manage threats and, in some cases, actively fight and resist.” (p. 5).
- Civilians’ self-protection inventories consist of conventional and non-conventional approaches to engage armed actors and influence the course of a threatening situation. Civilians tend to protect each other through relationship networks, like kinship and other protective social networks or through the patronage of powerful actors. However, these self-protection strategies rarely provide a sufficient degree of safety, security and dignity. Therefore, there is space for support from complimentary actions from international actors in these civilian self-protection strategies (p. 6).
- Effective protection and engagement with local civilians must be based upon a nuanced and thorough understanding of the context, sources of risk and vulnerability, and opportunities for protection. Analyzing threats to the protection of civilians must occur

with regard and reference to individuals, families, and communities at a national level, with the recognition that these threats might change over time (p. 8).

- At a minimum, community engagement enables communities to hold their leaders accountable, which can ultimately improve protection outcomes. Tackling issues such as a lack of knowledge about communities' understanding of legal rights help them to engage local authorities in positive and non-confrontational ways (p. 10).

Overarching recommendations

- The review supports the need for meaningful community engagement and community leadership in defining the threats affected communities perceive and the tactics and strategies they adopt in response to these threats.
- The research identifies the need to move beyond community engagement to direct support for locally-initiated, -led, and -owned protection initiatives. Despite these being of rare occurrence in the sector (p. 18).
- It also suggests the need for a more strategic focus and a holistic analysis that can highlight the multiplicity of interventions by a variety of protection actors, including those interventions by affected communities themselves (p. 18).

Concluding remarks

This working paper by Larissa Fast very interestingly focusses on the local capacities for protection and their often-overlooked ability to protect themselves. By highlighting the need for a nuanced and thorough understanding of the local protection context to support local protection initiatives by humanitarians, Fast pinpoints to a largely ignored aspect in the humanitarian system. Fast calls this a mismatch between rhetoric and reality that, supported by the research she has reviewed for the working paper, is an argument that should be considered seriously in humanitarian, development and security sectors. Her call for overcoming the isolated sectoral approach to protecting civilians and engaging communities is also timely and requires serious consideration. Local strategies are neither homogenous nor solely informal, and protection initiatives should take into account the diverse set of communities and authorities.

Fast has a conceptual approach to weighing protection approaches and arguing for a balanced interaction between local and international approaches in response to violence and armed conflict. The working paper has eloquently highlighted the challenges and opportunities for transcending the boundaries between international and local protection approaches, but more practical recommendations for specific security, humanitarian or development actors would have improved the paper.

Entry 4: Rupesinghe (2016). How can peacekeepers strengthen their engagement with local communities? Opportunities and Challenges in the field.

Title How can peacekeepers strengthen their engagement with local communities? Opportunities and Challenges in the field

Author Natasja Rupesinghe

Associated organization Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

Publication date 2 November 2016

Link to document [Rupesinge Article - PDF](#)

Type of literature Research article

Focus of the publication

Brief article which “examines the opportunities, challenges, and trade-offs that peacekeepers have to face when deciding when, with whom and in what ways to engage effectively with communities in the field.” Rupesinghe argues for further integration of bottom-up and people-centric approaches as a core strategy with operational guidelines in peacekeeping operations, as this creates an opportunity for UN practices to be more sensitive and responsive to the needs of local people (p. 1).

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- The main purpose of the various tools, policies, and best practices developed by the UN is to ensure peacekeepers are better equipped to engage with local people (p. 2).
- Examples of tools include:
 - **Gathering Local Data and Information Management;**
 - **Perception Surveys;**
 - and **Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Media** (p. 2).
- Rupesinghe emphasizes that the information and perceptions collected are not always routinely or effectively channeled into mission-wide analyses. This highlights the need for a coherent CE strategy with operational guidelines. However, the Civil Affairs team in the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) have tackled this “by using the Joint Mission Analysis Cell (JMAC)’s weekly predictive risk-assessment matrix, which synthesizes risks to civilians in a geographic table, as a modality for organizing their information into concise briefs (p. 2).”

Overarching recommendations

- UN Missions should develop accessible information-sharing mechanisms to funnel local field data into mission-wide analyses of conflict dynamics as well as to mission

leadership, to ensure that such information reaches top-level decision-makers – for example, using the JMAC as a central platform.

- Community representatives should participate in planning and assessment processes and senior leadership should periodically attend local platforms such as town-hall meetings to ensure that bottom–up perspectives are heard.
- More research is needed on how ICT and social media can be used to connect mission to local people and vice versa, as well as on how to tailor these strategies to suit both rural as well as urban settings.
- Conflict analysis should be undertaken with key, local representatives; program design can be jointly defined by communities and the mission, while local organizations can be mobilized as implementing partners to ensure an active role in decision-making.

Concluding remarks

This article succinctly highlights important aspects and much needed developments with regard to community engagement. Rupesinghe argues very well that UN missions often fail to effectively share and spread the experiences and perceptions collected in the field towards mission-wide headquarters. This communication issue hinders missions to respond adequately to valuable information that is gathered in the field. Another one of her arguments correctly focusses on the need for an UN-system wide, coherent community engagement strategy to tackle such communication gaps and data sharing issues.

The article is certainly recommended for a UN audience, but also other organizations that cope with operational challenges to translate locally gathered data to be of relevance for broader and higher-level actors. Also, including these higher-level actors in the processes of engagement increases mission transparency. Addressing the issues and incorporating the recommendations noted in this article would improve any community engagement initiative.

Nevertheless, the article has some practical shortcomings as it does not explicitly highlight the challenges surrounding the sensitive nature of engaging with local communities and activists in conflict settings, as well as sharing sensitive data amongst peacekeepers. Some practical suggestions for ensuring strong data encryption and how to overcome sensitivity issues with regard to local engagement would have substantiated the article.

Entry 5: Rupesinghe (2016). Community Engagement: softening the hard edge of stabilization

Title Community Engagement: softening the hard edge of stabilization

Author Natasja Rupesinghe

Associated organization Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

Publication date 17 June 2016

Link to document [Rupesinghe Conference Report – PDF](#)

Type of literature Conference Report

Focus of the publication

The conference report addresses the dichotomy between the means used in UN stability operations, such as extending state authority and adopting robust measures to dissipate armed groups, and the recognition that sustainable peace can only be achieved through bottom-up, community-driven approaches. It argues that stabilization has much to gain from people-centric approaches that are designed from the bottom-up. “A key question this article intends to answer is: can community engagement approaches underpinned by the logics of bottom-up peacebuilding contribute to making stabilization missions more responsive and sensitive to local people?”

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- The UN has developed a set of policies and best practices for engaging more effectively with communities, but these lack methodology and are far from systematic (p. 13).
- **Civil Affairs departments** have been the main component of UN missions that carry out the softer functions of stabilization, which often relate to building social cohesion through local conflict resolution, protection clusters, delivering quick impact projects, and peace dividends (p. 13).
- **Capturing local perceptions** has been used increasingly in peacekeeping missions, and is a tool through which UN operations can become more responsive and sensitive to local populations. Civil Affairs, who interact with local communities every day gather vast amounts of information. A unified, consistent approach to gathering this information is still lacking, and this information is not easily channeled upstream to the UNHQ, where important decisions are made. Another issue is that peacekeepers collect information about perceptions of short-term issues such as security, rather than of systematic root causes of conflict (p. 14).
- **Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs)** in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) have been praised for facilitating improved interaction and confidence-building between peacekeepers and

local communities. Local people are employed and trained by the UN and have been considered very effective in assessing threats and needs. Joint Protection Teams (JPT), which are small, ad-hoc teams of UN civilian, military and police staff are deployed to high-risk areas to generate recommendations for advancing protection of civilians and building confidence between the UN and local communities (p. 15).

- **Community Alert Networks (CANs)** have been established, with cell phones distributed to local communities and MONUSCO commanders (p. 16).

Overarching recommendations

- A community and people-oriented system-wide strategy in peace missions could mitigate some of the ‘harder’ effects of stabilization, such as extending the authority of an illegitimate state, by creating processes for increased state-society relations that foster trust – a common deficit between a government and people during conflict. As the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has demonstrated, using dialogue as a platform to generate input for stabilization programming creates a greater sense of local ownership and buy-in, which are important for local people who often feel marginalized from externally engineered stabilization programs.
- Security constraints impeded MINUSMA’s ability to reaching out to remote communities, which is a serious challenge and indicates the need to explore innovative methods of communication.
- Community engagement does not necessarily lead to reduced violence, or mean that stability will be reached immediately. However, by putting in place processes that delegate greater decision-making power and ownership to the main stakeholders of stability (e.g., the local community), it is possible to make missions more aware of the priorities and the impacts of interventions at the field-level.

Concluding remarks

The reports usefully contextualizes the transition from a previous state-centric UN peacebuilding frameworks towards an approach that is more enabling and focused on the people the mission intends to serve. This brief historical contextualization helps the reader understand the UN process of change in peacebuilding. The paper also usefully summarizes the main approaches the UN has taken to reduce violence through bottom-up initiatives. The paper uses case studies from MONUSCO and MINUSMA to explain how these bottom-up initiatives work in practice. The summary and reflection upon missions informs the reader of how these approaches have been applied and where potential challenges or opportunities lie.

The report could have benefitted from more focus on how information sharing, and data gaps can be ameliorated within and between missions and specific mission departments. However, the challenges indicated by Rupesinghe in her discussion section are notable and important to take away for a reader interested in enhancing CE practices.

Entry 6: Webb & Hogg (2016). Humanitarian Engagement with Non-State Armed Groups: Eliciting the Voices of Civilians in Armed Conflict

Title Humanitarian Engagement with Non-State Armed Groups: Eliciting the Voices of Civilians in Armed Conflict

Authors Joshua Webb & Charu Lata Hogg

Associated organization Chatham House: Royal Institute of International Affairs

Publisher Chatham House: Royal Institute of International Affairs

Publication date April 2016

Link to document [Webb & Hogg Article Link – PDF](#)

Type of literature Research Paper

Focus of the publication

This article notes that the voices of civilians living territories controlled by Non State Armed Groups (NSAG) are often unheard in dialogues around humanitarian needs and responses. Given that these voices should drive the humanitarian agenda, the paper argues technology (particularly mobile technology) presents opportunities for improved engagement and understanding of the needs of affected communities, and that the international humanitarian community must improve its efforts to systematize and learn through listening processes (p. 55 & 67).

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- The advances and increases in mobile communications technology have the potential to substantially and substantively improve access to civilian voices. These advances may be able to overcome and mitigate some of the challenges in ensuring that voices of civilians in armed conflict are heard (pp. 65-66).
- A key component in the synthesis of previously standard and digital humanitarianism has been the advent of virtual '*crisis maps*', whereby base mapping is supplemented with substantive information – such as indicating specific locations where fighting is taking place or where civilians are at acute risk. Such information, collected through news reports, monitoring of social media and even hotlines, is subsequently verified and transmitted to humanitarian staff on the ground. The availability of real-time data offers enormous potential for improving aid provision in humanitarian emergencies (p. 65).
- Simultaneously, these new technologies bring their own challenges and risks:
 1. The increased volume of available data has made it difficult to distinguish and distil the relevant from the vast amount of irrelevant data.
 2. The reliability of data is another related issue. "The often-quoted assertion that 'truth is the first casualty of war' is especially relevant in the digital age, where manipulated information may reach broad audiences within short

periods of time. Verifying data through eyewitnesses is a very real challenge in settings of natural disasters, and may be impossible in regions afflicted by conflict.”

3. Civilians who provide data for humanitarian or other purposes are only safe if the data they provide is sufficiently secure and anonymized.

Overarching recommendations

- Humanitarian organizations should learn from efforts to engage crisis-affected people in non-conflict settings, including development assistance, peacebuilding and non-conflict humanitarian work.
- While efforts to systematize a process of ‘listening’ to civilians in armed conflict are at a very early stage, there exists both the need and potential for humanitarian actors to increase their efforts in this respect.
- There is a clear need for a fundamental shift in institutional thinking and culture, which involves a transition from a ‘top-down’ to a ‘bottom-up’ approach with respect to the agency of affected populations is being recognized and documented.

Concluding remarks

Webb & Hogg provide timely and important suggestions for humanitarian to increase their engagement not only with civilians during armed conflict but also with NSAGs to create opportunities for protection of civilians. The papers suggestions to make more use of ICT and mobile communications to engage with hard-to-reach civilians in risk areas is an important one. On the one hand, the use of ICT should be promoted widely, and the humanitarian sector should make good use of the new technological systems available. But on the other hand, the authors rightfully acknowledge the pitfalls of using new technologies, like the reliability, sensitivity and security of the data provided. Civilians providing data for humanitarians are often taking risks, especially when in areas controlled by NSAGs.

Readers should be mindful of these technological challenges, but the article has many relevant suggestions for reaching and listening in to locals in constrained settings. However, the technological developments of the past four years have been immense, and therefore some suggestions in this article might be outdated. Instead, the suggestions can be used as inspiration for using the latest communications technologies. Still, care should be taken when using sensitive data, whether that is gather through physical communication or technological communication.

3. Community Engagement: Operational documents

Entry 7: United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2019). The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook

Title The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook
Author Baptiste Martin & Tara Lyle
Associated organization United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Publication date 2020
Link to document [UNDPO Handbook - PDF](#)
Type of literature Handbook

Focus of the publication

This handbook complements and further builds upon official policy and guidelines on Protection of Civilians (PoC) in UN peacekeeping. It seeks to aid the operationalization of policy and doctrine, and guide all peacekeeping personnel to effectively implement the mandate to protect civilians. The guidance provided applies at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Designed to acknowledge and address the multiplicity of operating contexts and challenges faced by peacekeeping operations, this handbook aims to provide concrete and modular response options for civilian, police and military peacekeepers to consider when analyzing and addressing PoC threats. In respect of community engagement guidelines and operationalization, Chapter 10 of this handbook is most relevant and used for this review.

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- Peacekeeping missions' engagement with communities is crucial for the mission's success. The reasons for undertaking community engagement are various but inter-related. These include:
 - *Increased situational awareness and understanding;*
 - *Understanding threat perceptions of communities and vulnerable populations, as well as their protection needs;*
 - *Understanding communities' means of self-protection, conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques;*
 - *Gathering information on potential threats faced by peacekeepers;*
 - *Creating and raising awareness and sensitization about the missions' mandate;*
 - *Understanding perceptions that communities have of the national, state and local actors and institutions responsible for and involved in protecting their rights and resolving conflicts;*

- *Understanding perceptions that communities have of the mission and encouraging mission acceptance by the local population; and*
- *Implementing projects, such as Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), and undertaking community-based activities (pp. 107-108).*
- To increase effectiveness of community engagement, “missions must be clear and transparent about their objectives.” Community engagement must be understood as a sustained physical activity in close physical proximity, or at a minimum, sustained communications. It is important that missions are mindful of the bilateral nature of community engagement, dependent on two-way communication. Therefore, missions should increase their focus on listening to communities (p. 108).
- Community engagement activities across missions may include:
 - *Establishing Community Alert Networks and other early warning and alert systems;*
 - *Supporting reconciliation and conflict management at the local level;*
 - *Supporting community engagement and advocacy with potential perpetrators;*
 - *Supporting community monitoring and reporting on violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law (IHL);*
 - *Supporting other local initiatives to prevent and respond to threats to civilians;*
 - *Supporting community-led physical protection mechanisms such as flight to a safer area;*
 - *Supporting the restoration of state authority, including building confidence between local communities and state authorities;*
 - *Supporting witness and victim protection measures before, during and after investigations and prosecutions of serious crimes, as well as the provision of psycho-social support;*
 - *Planning and implementing QIPs;*
 - *Sensitizing on the reintegration of ex-combatants to restore a climate of confidence between communities; and*
 - *Gathering information from affected communities on which areas may be contaminated by explosive hazards and working with the communities to develop programs that prioritize areas for clearance and effectively reach populations with risk education (pp. 108-109).*
- Community engagement should be conducted with regard to gender, diversity, and culturally sensitive local traditions. Local traditions and customs may not themselves be sensitive to gender and diversity, so balancing these considerations is vital for peacekeepers (p. 109).
- Peacekeeping operations should be aware of the potential risks to civilians their own actions might induce, particularly from the impact of military and/or police operations or activities. Missions must take actions to reduce these risks through a do-no-harm approach by undertaking a *risk assessment* of the effects of the mission’s actions on the community it intends to protect (p. 111).

Overarching recommendations

- Peacekeeping operations should take a people-centered approach to PoC, which understands the protection needs of communities based on their own perceptions and analysis of the threats and necessary responses. The mission's response to physical threats must take into account and support the existing community self-protection strategies and mechanisms (p. 107).
- Peacekeeping operations that are mandated and deployed for a finite amount of time are not a sustainable solution to conflict. However, these can support and nurture solutions to durable peace by supporting and building local capacity and addressing root causes of conflict through engagement with local communities (p. 107).
- When engaging with local populations for PoC, efforts should be directed at engaging all members of the community, including women, youth, minority groups, and various religious and ethnic groups. Efforts should not solely be directed to community leaders (p. 107).

Concluding remarks

The extensive UNDPO PoC Handbook is a comprehensive and recent document for practitioners and researchers that concern themselves with protecting the most vulnerable in conflict. The handbook has many guidelines and best practices for engaging with local populations during UN missions. A reader will gain valuable information and insights on the challenges and opportunities of engaging with and understanding the context of local communities in conflict settings. At the moment, the document is an overarching document outlining the framework of protection of civilians, in which community engagement is only a part of. Instead, a larger document on the best practices of engaging with communities during various missions would be beneficial.

Entry 8: CDAC Network (2019). Collective Communication and Community Engagement in humanitarian action: How-to Guide for Leaders and Responders

Title Collective Communication and Community Engagement in humanitarian action: How-to Guide for Leaders and Responders

Author CDAC Network

Associated organization CDAC Network

Publication date February 2019

Link to document [CDAC Guide - PDF](#)

Type of literature Guide

Focus of the publication

The guide describes the **framework, minimum actions, and services** for communication and community engagement, and the vision for a **collective approach**. It provides **practical guidance** on implementing the minimum actions and services, setting up national, multi-stakeholder platforms and providing leadership, championing and advocacy for change in this area. It is based on research into a number of initiatives and organizations as well as gap analyses and recommendations for strengthening and scaling practice.

The guide is intended primarily for practitioners and leaders working in national and international humanitarian and media development organizations as well as other entities involved in preparedness, response and recovery. Experience in the humanitarian sector and prior knowledge of relevant policies, plans and processes is assumed, as is familiarity with the humanitarian architecture, the humanitarian program cycle and accountability to affected populations. The content is illustrated by numerous case studies, in order to contextualize some of the practices outlined.

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- **Establishment of a national platform for communication and community engagement**
 - A nationally led approach to communication and community engagement (working group or similar) may already exist. In some cases, it may be necessary to establish one. The structure and functions of national platforms will vary according to context, based on needs and capacities, but all act as a complementary coordination service to existing and emerging humanitarian architecture. They may take the shape of a technical working group like the government-led multi-stakeholder platform Shongjog in Bangladesh, a community of practice like the one OCHA leads in the Philippines or a common service such as the Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project in Nepal (p. 58).

- **Implementing minimum actions and services for communication and community engagement**
 - Determining the communications landscape and understanding information needs and preferences; as communication and community engagement requires a sound understanding of the community, its languages, culture, economic conditions, social networks, political and power structures, norms and values, democratic trends, history, and experience with engagement efforts by outside groups. This can be done through *needs assessments* and *rapid assessments* (e.g. community perception survey, media and telecommunications landscape guides) (p. 21).

Overarching recommendations

- Local communities should feel involved in decisions that impact their lives. This can be done by proactively setting up evaluations that reflect on the participation of and the connection with local communities (p. 7)
- More effort is needed to solicit, hear and act upon the voices and complaints of disaster-affected people. Many people in humanitarian crises are unaware of how to make complaints about aid provision, abuse, or anything related to their needs (p. 8).
- Local communities should be able to access the information that helps them make decisions and regain control over their disaster-affected lives. Local communities encounter language barriers both when receiving information from humanitarian workers, and also when affected people try to articulate themselves to these humanitarians.
- “People affected by disaster are increasingly reliant on connectivity, and crisis-response programs need to catch-up”. Mobile telephone networks and the connectivity they provide can be a lifeline for those affected by humanitarian emergencies. People rely on these to stay in touch with family and friends, but also for navigation in distressing situations.

Concluding remarks

The CDAC network guide provides very detailed suggestions to improve humanitarian community engagement and especially humanitarian communication with communities during crises and disasters. The level of detail and stepwise guide for implementing the best practices suggested is very relevant for officers in the field that aim for improvement in their communication strategies with local communities. The guide does not explicitly concern itself with peacekeeping, peacebuilding or armed conflict, but it remains helpful tool to gain knowledge about ways to improve communications to affected communities.

Entry 9: Niederberger (2018). An Introduction to Community Engagement in WASH

Title An Introduction to Community Engagement in WASH

Authors Eva Niederberger, Lucy Knight & Marion O'Reilly

Associated organization Oxfam International

Publication date December 2018

Link to document [Niederberger Report - PDF](#)

Type of literature Guide

Focus of the publication

The humanitarian sector has been strengthening its focus on and commitment to community-centered responses in recent years. This guide aims to provide field staff with clear, accessible guidance on the principles and practice of community engagement in water, sanitation and health (WASH) programs. The content has been field tested in a variety of contexts. The principles and approaches described here are relevant in other programs and sectors too, but the target audience for this guide is WASH staff in humanitarian programs – especially those responsible for designing, implementing and monitoring public health promotion activities. It is also relevant for managers, public health engineers and decision makers interested in promoting good quality outcomes in WASH programs by ensuring that communities affected by crisis are at the center of the response.

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- **A Model of Community Engagement for Program Design and Implementation (Annex D)**
 - Information and analysis for program planning and design:
 - Information and analysis are needed to develop a good understanding of “the *emergency context, the affected population, and their behaviors and practices.*” *Rapid assessments* initially focus on the context and the level of risk to local communities as well as the presence or absence of other humanitarian actors. This is done to enable a quick response and decision-making process.
 - Contextual data is mainly derived from Oxfam’s and partners’ own assessments and information, shared through coordination mechanisms. Ideally, this should be shared and analyzed with gender and protection actors to ensure that decisions about the response are based upon a holistic understanding of the risks, needs, capacities and vulnerabilities of the population affected by the emergency (p. 10).

- **Community Engagement is a continuous process of handing over control**
 - A key element of community engagement is that it enables people to have a say in decision making wherever possible. **Annex E** represents it as a continuous process reflecting the relationship between affected communities and humanitarian response actors (Oxfam/partners/other agencies). Different levels of engagement may be practical or appropriate at different stages in the response, or later when things have stabilized, or they may happen simultaneously. The context will also play its part: what is possible in a conflict situation may be different from opportunities in a protracted crisis or natural disaster (p. 13).

Overarching recommendations

- Community involvement at all stages of the humanitarian program cycle is an essential right for people affected by emergencies and plays a vital role in achieving positive program outcomes. Measuring community participation in, and satisfaction with, the particular program helps to manage the way humanitarians engage with communities for maximum impact (p. 16).
- It is crucial to track progress by monitoring activities and receiving feedback from local communities with the purpose to modify the program accordingly. The context and situation evolve, so it is important to make sure the activities are adapted to remain relevant (p. 15).

Concluding remarks

The introduction to community engagement in WASH programs by Oxfam provides clear and relevant instructions and guiding principles for humanitarian field staff to keep in mind when implementing WASH projects. The document is clearly structured and has very useful practical tips and tricks for implementing community engagement in a WASH program. Despite the models and the document being primarily designed for Oxfam staff and WASH programs, the best practices and grounded principles communicated in the document are of relevance for other community engagement initiatives in different contexts, including for the security sector. However, the document's basic principles are only explained briefly and could benefit from more elaborate contextualization and empirical examples of the basic principles detailed.

Entry 10: Humanitarian Response (2018). Humanitarian Country Team: Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan for North-East Nigeria

Title Humanitarian Country Team: Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan for North-East Nigeria

Author Humanitarian Response

Associated organization Humanitarian Response

Publication date November 2018

Link to document [Humanitarian Response Guideline - PDF](#)

Type of literature Manual and Guideline

Focus of the publication

The Nigeria Humanitarian Country Team has developed this strategy with the technical support of the Community Engagement and Accountability to Affected People Working Group (CE/AAP WG). This document draws on international commitments made by Member States, donors and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) members, through various frameworks and forums, including the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. It also builds on lessons learnt from attempts made to increase the engagement of affected communities in other humanitarian contexts, especially in complex and protracted emergencies such as Sudan, Iraq and Yemen.

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- The document details three components or approaches that correspond with the various levels and degrees of community engagement. To increase effectiveness these components should be addressed and incorporated into the Nigeria Humanitarian Country Team's (HCT) Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC) (p. 9).

1. Bolstering communications and information sharing:

- Through continuous dialogue between humanitarian organizations (local and international) and affected people to ensure access to information regardless of their gender, age, tribe, language, literacy, location or social status and so they can make informed decisions for themselves and their families.
- Information must be reliable, systematic and to some extent predictable, to build and maintain trust.
- Based on a common message to avoid ambiguous and contradictory communication.
- Based on a detailed assessment of the communication preferences and needs of the affected communities.

2. Feedback collection and closing the feedback loop:

- Feedback data must be analyzed, visualized and shared widely, to ensure that feedback is acted upon in a systematic and sector-wide manner.

3. Establishing meaningful community participation:

- Representatives of the affected communities must be a part of the decision-making process, so that they gain an increased level of ownership over the way the response is led and prioritized. This also makes the response more relevant and durable.

Overarching recommendations

- Humanitarian responses should ensure that communities feel sustained ownership over the course of the humanitarian project and beyond. As such, the response should be people-driven and disparity of power and capacities between humanitarian organizations and affected peoples must be compensated for through representative community participation (p. 8).
- Two-way communication must be established in humanitarian projects to ensure that communities are informed of the services and aid available to them. This dialogue also allows any complaints and gaps to be tracked and addressed when needed (p. 8).
- Community engagement strategies should aim to build trust between affected communities and aid workers. Building trust assists in aligning strategic and operational perceptions between humanitarian workers and affected communities, resulting in a more effective response (p. 8).

Concluding remarks

This Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) report highlights important aspects of community engagement in situations of natural disasters that go beyond the context of natural disasters. Notions of two-way communications, mutual trust, and meaningful local participation are extremely important in effectively assisting local populations to rebuild in humanitarian crises. The report is limited to a humanitarian audience, but it involves useful information for security and military personnel. Though this relevance for security and military personnel is not immediately clear, the guidelines and recommendations of this document should be included in broader community engagement frameworks. The document is based on the North-Nigerian context, but this should not be a limitation if the general recommendations are adapted to other humanitarian contexts.

Entry 11: HHI & ICRC (2018). Engaging with People Affected by Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence

Title Engaging with People Affected by Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence. Taking Stock. Mapping Trends. Looking Ahead.

Authors Patrick Vinck, Anne Bennett & Jacobo Quintanilla

Associated organization Harvard Humanitarian Initiative & the International Committee of the Red Cross

Publication date February 2018

Link to document [HHI & ICRC Report – PDF](#)

Type of literature Research Report

Focus of the publication

This paper is a response to the recognition that the nature of armed conflicts around the world is changing, that "digital disruption" is having an impact on the humanitarian sector, and that delivering assistance while prioritizing close proximity and accountability – both physically and digitally – to people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence is a challenge. Based on a review of the relevant literature and interviews with representatives of the humanitarian sector, donors and community-based organizations, this paper offers: an overview of how the humanitarian community currently engages with people affected by armed conflict and other violence; a review of the opportunities and challenges for meaningful engagement; and a series of recommendations for both humanitarian organizations and donors.

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- **Affected people and local organizations are increasingly vocal about their own role and capacities in humanitarian action and seek to be included:**
 - Technological innovation has increasingly affected people's ability to speak voice their concerns ideas and criticisms. To meet these growing expectations, the collaboration between international organizations and local groups, including affected and at-risk communities, as well as the private sector, must be clarified and the terms of engagement redefined (p. 13).
 - It is crucial for international humanitarian organizations to improve their ability to understand affected people's existing and potential capacities. This process must look beyond community-based groups that might not be that representative. These capacities should then be strengthened and complemented, rather than substituted. It is also critical that humanitarian organizations improve affected people's points of access to humanitarian decision-making processes, throughout all phases of the program management cycle (p. 13).

- **Engagement requires that humanitarians learn to voluntarily distance from decision making and control with principled limits:**
 - The increasing levels of competence and assertiveness of some – but not all – local groups, combined with increasingly articulated frustration and disappointment at existing aid delivery, have increased pressure on the humanitarian system to devolve more responsibility and decision-making to the local level. It is argued that donors and humanitarian organizations are unwilling to concede any power. Beyond a new set of reforms, better evidence, or new tools (critical factors both at systemic and institutional levels), progress also requires a change in mindset that research alone cannot provide. Power should be shared responsibly. Giving people affected by crises too much influence could undermine humanitarian quality standards and humanitarian principles.
 - To strike an appropriate balance, a system is needed in which donors and aid agencies can incorporate the legitimate concerns and preferences of affected communities, but remain the guardians of humanitarian principles and quality standards.
- **Trust is a central and overarching feature of engagement:**
 - Trust might be based upon what people physically get from engagement with humanitarian organizations, and how affected people expect humanitarian organizations to behave. Local people's trust does not take into account the sectoral differentiations that humanitarians make, for them humanitarians are all in the same bag – largely speaking. This means that putting in place participation and accountability mechanisms for each specific program is key (p. 14).
- **The future (and the present) is digital:**
 - Humanitarian organizations are becoming more digitally present, and able to gather larger amounts of data from both offline and online groups of affected people. "The intelligent gathering, handling, storage and use of data, including the efficient breakdown of data silos, are going to become increasingly important challenges." Increasingly, digitally prepared humanitarian organizations will be able to deliver better quality and more accountable services to people affected by crises (p. 14).
 - "This includes deploying relevant technological solutions as a means to an end, rather than an end in its own right – something that is still often the case." The greatest challenge might be the enormous legal and ethical responsibilities relating to data gathering and handling, for which most organizations are currently ill-equipped. Part of the challenge lies in the low level of data literacy; how this problem is tackled, both in the humanitarian sector and among affected and at-risk populations, will be key (p. 14).

Overarching recommendations

- Both executive and operational leadership in humanitarian organizations must provide robust, concrete policy and operational support to further integrate engagement with, and accountability to, affected people at the core of their operations (p. 17).
- Humanitarian organizations need to consider a wider adoption of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Accountability to Affected People commitments (p. 17).
- Humanitarian organizations need to improve their capacity not only to assess needs, but also analyze them together with local capacities, the local environment and information ecosystem (p. 18).
- Humanitarian organizations must demonstrate transparently how decisions are guided, or not, by local feedback mechanisms that, when possible, involve local and representative decision-making bodies (p. 18).
- Humanitarian organizations must learn how to build and develop trust with affected people, including in the digital space and with innovative technologies (p. 18).
- Humanitarian organizations need to invest in new functions and areas of expertise in order to become more “accessible” and “digitally prepared” (p. 19).
- Humanitarian organizations must embrace new forms of collaboration with and seek positive influence over the private sector (p. 19).
- There is a need for more systematic inter-agency coordination (p. 20).
- Humanitarian organizations must support innovation that improves accountability to affected people, and enable the testing, scaling-up, documentation and sharing of good practices (p. 20).

Concluding remarks

This in-depth and extensive publication by the ICRC and HHI provides important insights and reflections upon the way humanitarians currently communicate and engage with local populations that are affected by violence and armed conflict. Their recommendations, guiding principles, and reflections on using digital information technologies in community engagement activities are particularly important especially considering the current shift towards remote engagement and more distant humanitarian support initiatives. The authors extensively reviewed and reflected upon the challenges surrounding best practices such as mapping information systems and understanding the way local populations access information. This document is recommended as a guiding document for all actors involved in community engagement practices, especially actors with intermittent or remote field presence such as INGOs and rotating military teams.

Entry 12: UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2017). Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Training Materials for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

Title Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Training Materials for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

Author Integrated Training Service of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support

Associated organization United Nations

Publication date 2017

Link to document [UN DPKO Training Material - PDF](#)

Type of literature Training Materials

Focus of the publication

The aim of these training materials is to provide troop-contributing countries with a comprehensive training package that combines aspects of PoC, Child Protection and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence for military peacekeepers in UN peacekeeping operations. This includes several small exercises as well as a larger scenario-based exercise, which can be run at the end of a course to strengthen participants' understanding of how PoC, Child Protection and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence considerations impact military planning processes at the tactical level.

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- **Community Alert Networks (CANs):**
 - The CAN is a network established in local communities for the exchange of information, wider engagement, and ability to alert the community and protection actors in threatening times. These alert networks should be established in a way that does not expose local partners to retaliation and should consult with the human rights network (p. 229).
- **Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs):**
 - The CLAs are national or local staff provided by the mission's Civil Affairs Section. These CLAs act as interlocutors and provide an interface between the deployed UN military and the local communities. CLAs are a useful tool for effective liaison and engagement with local communities. Within the context of the mission's community engagement strategy, CLAs carry out a wide range of tasks, including information gathering, information dissemination to the local population, and/or the management of the CAN. The CLAs also participate in Joint Protection Teams (JPTs) missions and monitor impacts of protection activities (p. 229).

- **Joint Protection Teams (JPTs):**
 - JPTs are small teams comprising civilian, police, and military peacekeeping personnel that can be deployed on an ad-hoc basis to investigate threats or follow-up on reports (p. 229).

Overarching recommendations

- An important aspect of community engagement is to ensure the safety and security of the interlocutors. Peacekeeping personnel must find ways to minimize and mitigate the risks for local sources (p. 230).
- The dignity and confidentiality of local community members, especially survivors of child abuse or sexual violence, must be respected. All information received from these vulnerable groups must be confidential as they are often highly sensitive (p. 232).
- Think outside-of-the-box about engaging local communities, beyond the standard mission tools.

Concluding remarks

The Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Training Materials for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations provides insight into the materials covered to prepare military peacekeepers. The extensive file shows various presenting materials and guidelines for training sessions. However, the presentations on community engagement were brief in comparison to other presentations. One would expect that these presentations would have incorporated more detail on local ownership and cultural sensitivity, as well as information on how to build trust between the peacekeeping force and the local population. The materials covered here could be improved with these suggestions. Although it is expected that the trainer has a larger role to play in communicating these aspects of community engagement than is presented by these training materials.

Entry 13: Niederberger, Ferron & O'Reilly (2016). Guide to Community Engagement in WASH

Title Guide to Community Engagement in WASH
Authors Eva Niederberger, Suzanne Ferron & Marion O'Reilly
Associated organization Oxfam International
Publication date November 2016
Link to document [Oxfam Guide – PDF](#)
Type of literature Guide

Focus of the publication

This guide is a compilation of best practices and key lessons learned through Oxfam's experience of community engagement during the 2014–15 Ebola response in Sierra Leone and Liberia. It aims to inform public health practitioners and program teams about the design and implementation of community-centred approaches (p. 5).

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- **Assessing the context**
 - Community engagement in the WASH program required a sound understanding of differences and vulnerabilities, and a genuine desire to understand community perspectives. Very little in-depth assessment information was documented at the beginning of the 2014–15 Ebola response. It is therefore vital to conduct structured assessments in order to work out priorities for responses, as well as to inform incoming program staff. Using socio-anthropological data analysis helped the WASH program teams to understand the perceptions of the communities at risk, as well as their norms and beliefs (p. 7).
- **Understanding community history and leadership dynamics**
 - In the WASH program it was found that good understanding of past and current relationship networks in the community is vital. For example, the imposition of bylaws was seen as an important form of local governance in previous crisis situations. However, these were considered only particularly relevant when adopted at community level and with cooperation from natural community leaders. Applied and rapid social research in the first phase of a crisis can contribute to the understanding of cultural beliefs and the role of traditional communal leadership.

- **Determining community capacity**
 - Detailing communities' resources, capacity, and coping mechanisms prior to and during a crisis can help to recognize their contribution and skillset, while localizing where support is most needed. As such, "agencies can then build upon communities' existing capabilities (p. 8)."
- **Creating access to appropriate information**
 - Ensuring communities' access to accurate and culturally appropriate information is vital, as it helps people to make informed decisions. This requires use of appropriate communication channels to reach people "where they are." "Top-down and negative communication – such as 'Ebola kills' and 'there is no vaccine' – resulted in increased fear and stigma, dissuading people from seeking treatment (p. 9)."

Overarching recommendations

- A sound understanding of the diversity and varied vulnerabilities within affected communities is vital. Resources must be devoted to understanding community perspectives and advocating for community-focused interventions. Specialists, such as anthropologists and epidemiologists, may be required for information to be collected, documented and used effectively (p. 6-7).
- One-size-fits-all models of community engagement are not the best solution. It is better to recognize the potential capabilities of communities in each situation and provide context-specific support. This allows communities to take action to protect themselves using a 'menu' of different strategies, developed using a community-led approach. To do this effectively, key groups (e.g., male and female leaders, traditional healers, religious leaders, older people, youth and children) need to be identified (p. 6-7).
- Advocacy efforts should be directed at promoting inclusive and representative ideas, concerns, questions and solutions of communities, and ensuring that only useful and practical information is given to communities by humanitarian actors (p. 6-7).
- The information given to communities must be prioritized to ensure that the crisis affected population understands and uses the most effective protective actions (e.g., in the case of Ebola, early isolation and referral, and not touching the dead). The uptake and use of these specific actions must be monitored, and rumours about diseases and treatment processes should be documented in order to track progress (p. 6-7).
- It is important to work with others (from all sectors) to increase the transparency of medical and burial processes, especially where there is a lack of understanding and/or trust in the healthcare system. This can include step-by-step guides for referral or burial management, and showing videos to illustrate what to expect (p. 6-7).
- Support, training and supervision for newly recruited staff are vital to ensure responses are community-centred, effective and accountable (p. 6-7).

- Community engagement supports every other aspect of a response (e.g., testing and treatment, safe burials, etc). Therefore, active coordination and planning with other sectors is crucial at the local and district levels, as well as with national collaborators (p. 6-7).
- Program managers should actively support and foster regular information exchanges between program teams within and between organizations (e.g., daily debriefs) (p. 6-7).
- Using fear to encourage changes in behavior can be counterproductive. It is better to promote self-reliance and self-help among affected populations (p. 6-7).

Concluding remarks

This guide for community engagement in WASH programs by Oxfam provides concrete, practical, and relevant instructions for humanitarian field staff to implement WASH projects. Despite the models and the document being primarily designed for Oxfam staff and WASH programs, the overarching recommendations and principles communicated in the document are of relevance for other community engagement projects in different contexts, including for the security sector. However, the document's basic principles are only explained briefly and could benefit from more elaborate contextualization and empirical examples of the basic principles detailed. Also, the authors could highlight potential pitfalls and present lessons learned from earlier project implementation.

Entry 14: Brockmeier & Rotmann (2016). Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peace Operations: Practical Challenges and Tools for the Field.

Title Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peace Operations: Practical Challenges and Tools for the Field.

Authors Sarah Brockmeier & Philipp Rotmann

Associated organization Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI)

Publication date 2016

Link to document [GPPI Report - PDF](#)

Type of literature Civil Affairs Toolkit

Focus of the publication

This toolkit focuses on support to local conflict management. It lays out the practical challenges faced by civil affairs teams in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the DR Congo (MONUSCO) in their daily work on local conflicts that might be familiar to the civil affairs staff of other UN missions. In the dozens of conversations, roundtables and workshops with UNMISS and MONUSCO civil affairs staff conducted for this toolkit, the challenges and good practices identified are mostly related to the management and organization of work, although some do address key issues of support to conflict management itself (p. 5). This toolkit focuses on one particular aspect of civil affairs work: support to local conflict management. There are many competing usages of the term “conflict management.” This toolkit uses it as an umbrella term for prevention, mitigation or resolution conducted in a manner that recognizes the constant presence of social and political conflict in the area where a peace operation has been deployed to (p. 11).

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- **Hold regular strategy workshops to discuss priorities**
 - The Civil Affairs Division in South Sudan pulled a few members (one team leader or deputy, one additional international officer and one national officer) from three of its state teams out of the field for a one-day strategy retreat in Juba. Following in-depth consultations with the civil affairs leadership and the members of the three teams, a group of external facilitators (including the authors of this toolkit) designed and moderated the retreat. As a group, the civil affairs officers first went through a summary conflict analysis for their respective states, prioritized the state’s most pressing and/or most promising conflicts, and developed realistic mid-term objectives. They then split into mixed working groups to develop strategies for reaching these objectives (p. 21).

- **Avoid Unnecessarily Constraining Details in the Workplan**
 - In Lakes State (South Sudan), the civil affairs team experimented with an annual workplan and budget that purposefully avoided unnecessarily constraining details. It specified the activities that were to be conducted in each time period (e.g., “workshop”), but avoided tying itself down more than a year in advance to specific locations and participants by using generic information such as “Lakes State” or “community leaders.” This allowed the team to allocate the available activities and budgets flexibly, in line with constantly changing conflict dynamics as well as changes in available funding (p. 23).
- **Invest in Training of Local Trainers**
 - In the DRC, civil affairs is making a concerted effort not to conduct any trainings by itself. The teams always try to use an external, local mediator or trainer. MONUSCO supports “train the trainer” seminars for these local mediators – for example, by flying them to trainings in Kinshasa. By doing so, the mission ensures that knowledge of how to conduct such conflict mediation workshops stays with the communities. Relatedly, a lesson learned by MONUSCO Civil Affairs is to focus these trainings on people with incentives to stay in their respective communities – often the older and more-settled community leaders. There have been instances of younger community leaders using their new qualifications to apply for jobs with international aid agencies and leaving the communities in which they were supposed to mediate. Similar problems have come up with religious leaders, doctors and teachers who were redeployed elsewhere in the country by their congregation or by the ministries of health or education after their training. Therefore, teams should try to select for training those leaders who are most likely to stay in the community (p. 27).
- **Feed Local Knowledge into Mission-Wide Analytical Products**
 - In UNMISS, JMAC runs a weekly predictive risk-assessment matrix: essentially, a geographically organized table that identifies and prioritizes the risks of violence against civilians. The information for this risk assessment is sourced from all parts of the mission. Local civil affairs teams, with strong support from the reporting officers at civil affairs HQ in Juba, use this JMAC-led process to synthesize their extensive knowledge about local conflicts into extremely concise analytical products (often just 1–2 paragraphs per state/province), accessible to other sections and the mission’s senior management. It is a major investment for UNMISS Civil Affairs to develop these briefs (and to do so every week), but it makes an important contribution to mission-wide situational awareness and ultimately to better protection of civilians. It is a more effective mechanism than expecting other sections to consume detailed reporting about civil affairs activities themselves (p. 33).

- **Deploy Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs)**
 - Recognizing the need for a better link between local communities and the mission, MONUSCO Civil Affairs created Community Liaison Assistants in 2010. As of 2015, more than 200 CLAs are based in around 70 military MONUSCO bases in Eastern DRC. CLAs are national staff who usually live on the base or in the communities. They support interaction between the military, local communities and state authorities, by establishing connections, acting as translators, gathering information about local conflict dynamics and running Community Alert Networks that inform MONUSCO about protection threats in the communities. They have become an invaluable resource for the mission's conflict management activities and serve as an example that other missions, including in South Sudan and Mali, are beginning to emulate. Currently, however, CLAs are very dependent on the military, including for transportation (p. 35).
- **Add Civilian Reporting to Military Channels**
 - In the Ituri province (DRC), MONUSCO is improving the quality of information available to military commanders at the provincial HQ level by adding a civilian reporting channel parallel to that of the military. When Community Liaison Assistants report a threat related to local conflicts to their respective MONUSCO base commander, they simultaneously send a report to the civil affairs section of the provincial HQ in Bunia. The latter forwards this "flash report" to the head of office as well as to the commander of the Ituri Brigade (IB), where it often arrives more quickly and, more importantly, in greater detail than through the military reporting channel. This is particularly relevant in an area where military contingents operate, whose local commanders and staff officers often have difficulty communicating in French or English, and where some military staff sections simply lack the situational awareness to interpret and contextualize fragmentary information received from deployed units. The complementary reporting channel through civil affairs remedies such challenges in a simple and effective way (p. 35).
- **Strengthen Civilian Presence on Military Bases**
 - In the DRC, the Ituri office of MONUSCO is experimenting with the establishment of a more permanent presence of civilian UN staff on the smallest military bases. In addition to language assistants and CLAs, a few additional civilian staff will be posted to liaise with local authorities and guide the work of the CLAs. Such staff will also provide coordination with military commanders on a level of comparable seniority, thus implementing the peacekeeping principle of civilian leadership at this more-senior level too (p. 35).

- **Empower Citizens to Demand Basic Services from their Local Representatives**
 - In Rutshuru (North Kivu, DRC), MONUSCO's Stabilization Support Unit (SSU) has steered funding to a project for community violence reduction in the context of the reintegration of former members of the FDLR militia. The project is implemented by Resolve, an international NGO, and its local partner FEMISA. In alignment with the international community's stabilization strategy for the DRC (International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, ISSSS), the project includes a bottom-up process to establish effective contact between the targeted communities (villages that have accepted former fighters to reintegrate) and the superior authorities of the state. These so-called "democratic dialogues" are designed to empower citizens and communities at the lowest level to articulate their legitimate demands for basic services and political representation vis-à-vis the politicians who claim to represent them (p. 55).

Overarching recommendations

- Civil affairs is not an island. Many of its key functions are effective only in close collaboration with other parts of the mission. This cuts both ways: better conflict prevention and protection of civilians requires greater support to local conflict management, which entails structural adjustments in a mission that enable a civil affairs team to make the most out of its unique capabilities and resources (p. 59).
- In some missions, a revision of security protocols as part of the larger UNDSS shift from risk avoidance to risk management might be required, even if it does not materialize overnight.
- If UN missions want to be better attuned to local political dynamics, they must invest in on-the-ground knowledge (e.g., hiring Community Liaison Assistants, which is currently underway in a number of missions beyond MONUSCO) and effectively feed the wealth of local analysis produced by the civil affairs community into mission-wide information channels and decision-making processes.

Concluding remarks

This extensive Civil Affairs toolkit by the GPPI provides very concrete and practical recommendations for improving local conflict management mechanisms. Though it does not explicitly use the term community engagement, the recommended actions involve many features and factors that are included in many definitions of community engagement. The most notable suggestion of the GPPI toolkit is arguably the inclusion of civilian perspectives in the military sector. Other documents reviewed did not as clearly articulate the synergy between local populations and military to be required for local engagement. Including the military in local conflict management obviously is accompanied by sensitivity issues, but if the protection and safety of the included population is guaranteed, a civil-military cooperation is very beneficial.

4. Community Engagement: Commentaries & case-specific analyses

Entry 15: UN OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division (2019). Evaluation of the contribution of the UNMISS Civil Affairs Division to the reduction of local conflict in South Sudan

Title Evaluation of the contribution of the UNMISS Civil Affairs Division to the reduction of local conflict in South Sudan

Author United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (UNOIOS) Inspection and Evaluation Division

Associated organization United Nations

Publication date 26 April 2019

Link to document [UN OIOS Report UNMISS - PDF](#)

Type of literature Evaluation report

Focus of the publication

The evaluation report determined the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the activities conducted by the Civil Affairs Division (CAD) of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and their potential contribution to local conflict reduction in the country. Amongst the missions' largest civilian component, CAD led the missions' efforts to reduce conflict at the local level. The evaluation found that the location of CAD activities was relevant to local conflict reduction. The evaluation highlighted a discrepancy between the areas in which CAD has invested resources to tackle cattle related conflicts (South Sudanese border regions), and the area in which most cattle related conflict fatalities had occurred (interior of South Sudan). Furthermore, the evaluation made one critical and six important recommendations to the CAD of UNMISS (p. 4).

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

UNMISS' CAD projects and activities were located in close proximity to conflict incidents. This aided UNMISS CAD's its geographic relevance and ability to respond with regard to conflict hotspots, such as Lakes State and western Jonglei State (p. 11). The formulation of Special Expenditure Projects (SEPs) in response to conflicts in the field contributed to the relevance of CAD work following conflict incidents. The locations of UNMISS field offices and CAD projects were primarily in government-controlled areas with a predominantly Dinka population. This localization and the stark ethnic polarization limited other ethnic groups participation in CAD projects. Long-term field presence by, engaging with a wide-range of civilians, and increased women's participation in CAD projects, was highly praised by the evaluations report (p. 16).

Overarching recommendations

- Critical recommendation: UNMISS leadership should ensure that CAD:
 - Incorporates a risk and evidence-based methodology into its planning of activities so that local conflicts that are material, persistent and problematic, especially those related to cattle, are effectively addressed.
 - Ensures adequate inclusivity of its local conflict reduction efforts through engagement with all relevant conflicting communities involved (p. 23).
- UNMISS leadership should resolve issues related to information sharing between JMAC and other Mission components. Also, UNMISS leadership should improve CE through adoption of a clear Mission-wide and holistic strategy to deepen interactions and engagements with all relevant community stakeholders for achieving durable peace (p. 24).
- UNMISS should ensure that CAD enhances cooperation and communication between civilians and South Sudanese military to respond to and reduce security concerns raised by the local population. Also, CAD should enhance its endeavors to accurately and immediately refer security concerns raised by women to appropriate Mission components, especially UNMISS leadership and military, and duly followed up. CAD should increase collaboration with the Gender Unit and/or Gender Protection Advisor, to further promote women's meaningful participation in local conflict resolution mechanisms (p. 24).
- UNMISS leadership should improve CAD's information gathering efforts by widening its sources of information to include a cross-section of society (p. 24).
- UNMISS CAD should communicate its knowledge of local conflicts, dynamics, results and impact to the Mission's leadership in a proactive manner. This way of communication will improve the applicability, integration, and strategic value of CAD into the wider responsibilities of UNMISS.

Concluding remarks

The evaluation report aids in understanding how the UN evaluates its missions and missions' departments while also providing important recommendations for improving the capacities of, in this case, the UNMISS CAD. The evaluation report repeatedly and importantly calls for a coherent community engagement strategy to be implemented in the CAD, which raises interest into the manner this recommendation is taken up by CAD's. Furthermore, there is a lot of focus on improving communication and information sharing between the Civil Affairs Division and UNMISS military, it is interesting to understand in what ways the CAD aims to ensure sensitive information of local population stays anonymous and encrypted.

Entry 16: Van der Merwe & Langa (2019). South Africa's Community Work Program: Local Peacebuilding Innovation Within a National Developmental Architecture

Title South Africa's Community Work Program: Local Peacebuilding Innovation Within a National Developmental Architecture

Authors Hugo van der Merwe & Malose Langa

Publisher Journal of Peacebuilding and Development

Publication date May 2019

Link to document [Van der Merwe & Langa – PDF](#)

Type of literature Research Article

Focus of the publication

This research article examines South Africa's Community Work Program (CWP) as a case study of an attempt to address two key dilemmas facing peacebuilding theory and practice: (a) balancing the need to address immediate and long-term causes of conflict and violence, and (b) balancing the need for a large-scale systematic approach whilst creating space for local ownership and agency. Drawing on in-depth case studies of six CWP community interventions, it demonstrates how this national public employment sector program has been shaped into a vehicle for peacebuilding by local actors. Whilst these initiatives still face resistance to local ownership and innovation, they demonstrate how local agency can integrate national developmental priorities with local safety and security priorities (p. 49).

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- The CWP in South Africa was launched as a response to national government recognition of the desperation of masses of unemployed citizens trapped in poverty. The program was designed to use public employment to further community development. "The program was designed to provide "an employment safety net" to eligible unemployed people by offering them regular work 2 days each week for an indefinite period (p. 50)."
- This public sector employment project sought to create work opportunities in impoverished neighborhoods. In contrast to other public sector employment programs in South Africa, it encourages community consultation and participation at the outset, in each community where it is implemented. Community meetings are often organized by the local municipality or by the assigned implementing actor (development Civil Society Organization) to facilitate the introduction of the program. It is during these meetings that the recruitment processes are also discussed, including the formation of **Local Reference Committees (LRCs)**, which consist of various stakeholders in the community. The LRC is responsible for overseeing and providing support and guidance around the implementation of the program.

Overarching recommendations

The research was of an exploratory nature, seeking to identify the range of strategies and activities used by CWP sites that could contribute to violence prevention. It identified evidence within each site on:

- **Prioritizing economic and safety needs**
 - CWP participants commented that the reliable income contributed immensely in meeting some of their basic survival needs (p. 54).
 - CWP was also utilized by participants to address economic needs through the program, by starting up their own small businesses (p. 54).
 - CWP also addressed the basic survival needs of other community members not participating in CWP by establishing projects such as food gardens or personal assistance (p. 55).
- **Degree of local ownership and initiative regarding local priorities.**
 - CWP's implementation varied from one community to another (p. 55). In some communities the program was run in a highly centralized manner. Other CWP sites operated with a much deeper ethos of community participation and accountability.
 - "The degree to which communities in fact took control and felt ownership of these CWP projects varied from one site to the next. Whilst the designers had envisioned a high level of community control, this was not always the case on the ground. Some are more centrally controlled by the implementing agency; others operate through a very consultative process that involves a range of community stakeholders. Whilst formal guidelines for the CWP require the establishment of LRC's to enhance responsiveness and accountability, the extent of their active role in strategizing and guiding interventions varies considerably (p. 55)."
 - "In communities where the CWP facilitated a high degree of participation in the selection and development of projects, it managed to foster a sense of broad ownership and control. The CWP thus became viewed as a tool in the hands of the community that can promote local development in accordance with local priorities (p. 55)."
- **Measures to promote inclusion and intra-community collaboration.**
 - The level of inclusivity and intra-community collaboration varied significantly between CWP sites. "Some sites sought a broad inclusive approach and actively targeted marginalized members such as ex-offenders, whilst others operate under guidance from political leadership and follow more restrictive recruitment practices (p. 56)."

Entry 17: Spink (2018). Protection with Less Presence: How the Peacekeeping Operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo is Attempting to Deliver Protection with Fewer Resources

Title Protection with Less Presence: How the Peacekeeping Operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo is Attempting to Deliver Protection with Fewer Resources

Authors Lauren Spink

Associated organization CIVIC

Publication date 2018

Link to document [Spink – PDF](#)

Type of literature Report

Focus of the publication

In 2018, the United Nations Member States increased pressure on peacekeeping operations by enacting budget reductions and requesting peacekeeping operations to develop clear exit strategies. These objectives may seem innocuous to some and overdue to others. However, cuts to mission resources could have serious implications in countries that host peacekeeping operations, including negative consequences for civilians exposed to violence and violations in armed conflict. Reducing peacekeeping resources could be particularly detrimental if decisions on whether, when, and how to reduce budgets and personnel are not clearly linked to conditions on the ground and to assessments of how downsizing is likely to affect the safety and security of civilians. This report explores the challenges of downsizing in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo (p. 3).

CE Guidelines and/or Operational Tools

- **Collaborating with humanitarian under a new model in MONUSCO:**
 - The realization that MONUSCO will likely have a shrinking field presence in eastern DRC has increased interest in closer collaboration between MONUSCO and humanitarian officials. Despite this fact, the shrinking field presence is also initiating debates between those humanitarians who advocate for closer coordination and information sharing between the two parties to help them maintain awareness of protection concerns, and other humanitarians who advocate a standard of co-existence but oppose closer collaboration to protect distinction—their clear separation from parties to the conflict. In this regard, MONUSCO is launching a review of coordination methods to see how these are functioning. In addition to this, humanitarians are trying to revive the use of

protection matrices, which emerged in the DRC as a form of collaboration between humanitarians and MONUSCO.

- **Protection Matrices:**

- Protection matrices identify the areas with the highest protection priorities “by categorizing them as “must”, “could”, or “should” protect (p. 15).” In recent years, these protection matrices have fallen out of use, but if they are revived this method allows humanitarians to easily share information on threats to local communities, without disclosing confidential information on victims or witnesses that have communicated the threat indicators. If these matrices make a return in the proceedings of MONUSCO and humanitarians, a setting should be identified to discuss and share the information, in which governmental actors are not included, as Congolese security actors may pose threats to civilians as well (p. 16).

- **Integration of alternate networks:**

- Congolese authorities and humanitarian organizations have their own early warning and alert systems that function alongside MONUSCO’s CANs. These alert systems should be integrated without endangering civilians (p. 16).

Overarching recommendations

- MONUSCO should provide clear and timely decision-making based on early warning analysis to ensure uniformed personnel deploy at the first signs of a deteriorating security situation to prevent violence.
- MONUSCO has to make sure that there is adequate consultation internally between MONUSCO’s military forces and civilian personnel, and externally consult humanitarians ahead of base closures. These consultations should take place at an early stage to feed into the decision-making process on closures.
- Information-sharing and coordination between MONUSCO and humanitarians should continue to determine whether and in what ways collaboration can be strengthened to fill protection gaps from MONUSCO’s reduced field presence. In particular, MONUSCO should engage with humanitarian actors to revive the use of protection matrices in a format that respects humanitarian principles and civil-military guidelines.

Concluding reflections on Community Engagement

Community Engagement in Peacekeeping versus Peacebuilding:

- After conducting this literature review, it is found that little distinction is made in the documents consulted between community engagement during missions with a peacekeeping mandate and those with a peacebuilding mandate. The documents that mentioned particular suggestions for peacekeepers, primarily focused on building trust and increasing their engagement with the local population through better information sharing, using risk-assessments, and better information management. However, other documents that focused more on a longer-term engagement with the local population to foster sustainable conflict management also focused on building trust, improving communication mechanisms, and nurturing local ownership. From this small distinction, a longer-term engagement also creates opportunities for peace actors to work with the local population in a sustainable and mutually beneficial relationship, instead of solely working on the basis of their information for reaching operational objectives.

Final remarks:

- Overall, the documents used for this review were useful in providing timely and relevant guidelines and recommendations for improving community engagement in peace operations and humanitarian missions. However, the lack of a country-specific community engagement strategy for UN missions' Civil Affairs Divisions is a notable shortcoming that was only addressed in a few of the documents. Creating a coherent strategy that takes into account the local context can provide the necessary basis and plan of action for UN personnel and assisting INGOs to engage with the local population in a relevant and safe manner. Why is it that Civil Affairs Divisions lack coherent planning for community engagement within the scope of the mission mandate?
- The diversity of definitions used for community engagement by various organizations indicates that the concept and the practice should be subject to constant reflection and reorganization. The key question here is whether this reflection is feasible and how the organizations that are engaging with local populations can learn the best from others' successes and challenges. Defining what "community engagement" actually entails for a specific organization, mission, project or operation could be helpful in this regard.
- Ultimately, the aim of local community engagement should be to enable and protect local populations in times of crisis and conflict. This must be done with extreme care, and the humanitarian principles should serve as the minimum of protecting and enabling those in need. The safety and protection of civilians should never be overlooked.

Annex A

Figure 1: Rationale for Community Engagement (source: Henigson, 2020, p. 5).

Box 1. Rationale for community engagement

UN peacekeeping operations engage with communities for many reasons. These fall under three overarching categories.²⁹

Sensitization and relationship and confidence building

- Raising awareness and sensitizing local communities on the mission's mandate, roles, and responsibilities
- Managing expectations and sensitizing local communities on what the mission can and cannot do
- Building confidence and relationships between the mission and community members

Information gathering and analysis

- Gathering information to improve situational awareness and to understand the context and community-level protection needs
- Gathering information on potential or ongoing threats faced by communities and their protection needs
- Understanding communities' existing self-protection, conflict-resolution, and reconciliation mechanisms

De-escalation, mediation, and community-level peacebuilding

- Supporting community-level and intercommunal mediation and conflict-resolution and reconciliation efforts
- Implementing projects such as quick-impact projects, liaising with humanitarian actors to support longer-term projects, and undertaking community-based activities
- Supporting community-level projects and efforts aimed at building a protective environment
- Supporting the restoration of state authority at the local level and building local-level confidence in state authorities

All three categories of community engagement activities support peacekeeping operations' POC efforts. The categories are also interlinked and mutually reinforcing. For example, increasing communities' understanding of a mission's mandates, understanding their perceptions of national and local institutions and of the mission itself, and implementing community-based projects and activities all build trust. Greater levels of trust between community members and the mission, in turn, increase the likelihood that communities will share information. Understanding communities' existing self-protection, conflict-resolution, and reconciliation mechanisms can help design POC strategies and develop programming to support conflict-mediation efforts.

Annex B

Figure 2: Community engagement activities (source: Henigson, 2020, p. 9).

Table 1. Community engagement activities⁴⁵

	Civilian Component	Military Component	Police Component
Awareness raising, information sharing, and relationship building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with local communities to sensitize them on the mission mandate • Information sharing through activities such as public events, radio shows, or use of social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal engagement with community members during dismounted patrols • Meetings with local communities in hotspots to sensitize them on the mission mandate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal engagement with community members during dismounted patrols • Information sharing in community meetings • Meetings with local communities in hotspots to sensitize them on the mission mandate
Information and peacekeeping-intelligence gathering and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering of information from community-alert network focal points • Discussions with community members led by community liaison assistants during military patrols • Gathering of information on communities' protection concerns and self-protection capacities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with community members in hotspots to gather information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with community members in urban areas and camps for refugees or internally displaced persons to gather information • Gathering of information from local contacts and national police networks
Conflict resolution and reconciliation and community-level peacebuilding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of inter-community meetings to mediate conflict • Capacity building workshops with civil society organizations or community-level groups and actors • Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and community violence reduction (CVR) programming • Quick-impact projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to local conflict-resolution and reconciliation efforts, usually in coordination with civilian sections • Support for quick-impact projects, usually in coordination with civilian sections • Facilitation of dialogue between host-state security forces and local communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts to build community-level trust in the national police • Support to local conflict-mediation efforts • Capacity-building support to strengthen community members' self-protection measures

Annex C

Figure 3: The United Nations Community Contextual Analysis and Mapping of Local Peacebuilding Civil Society Actors (source: UNPSO, 2020, p. 9).

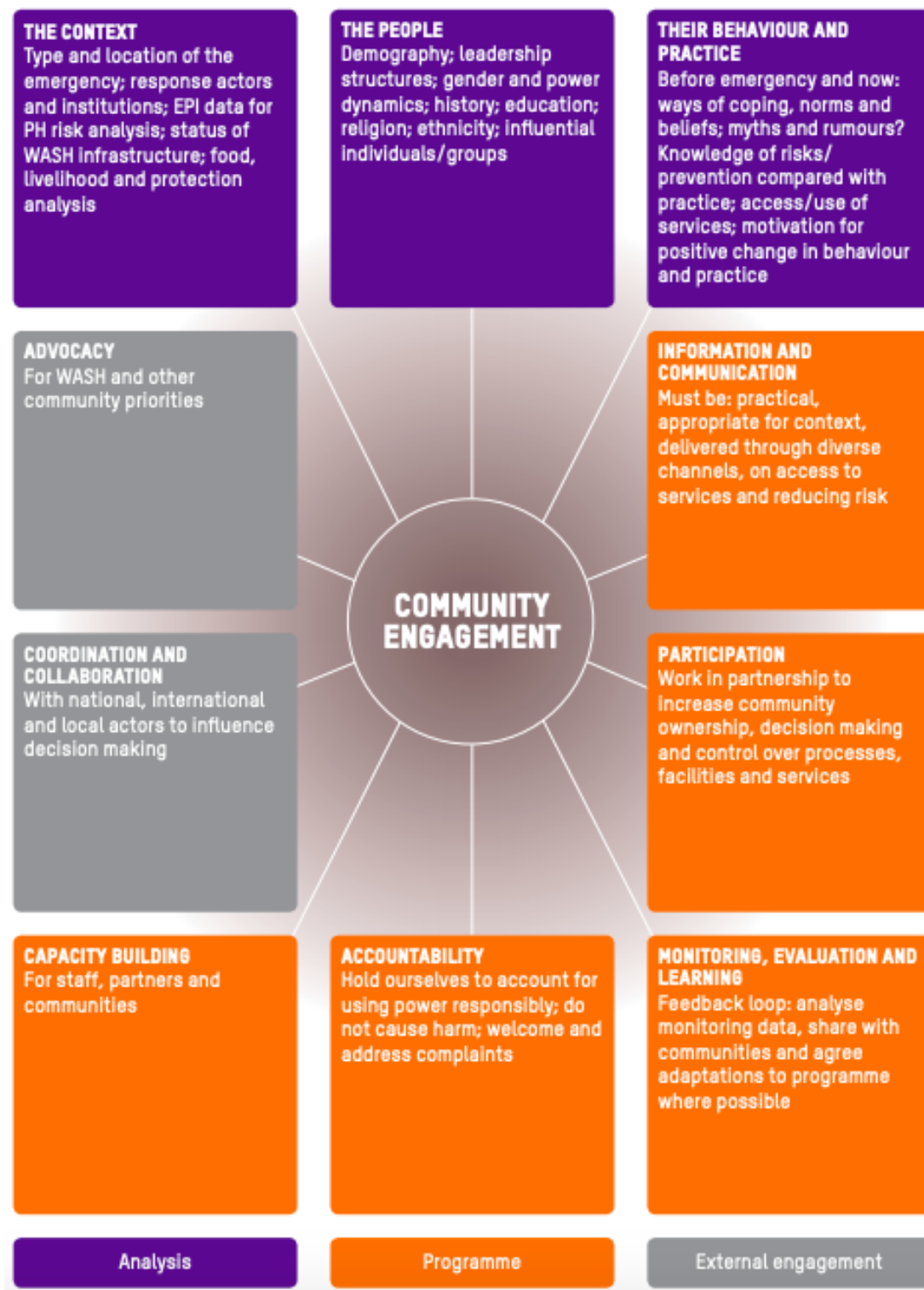
TABLE 1. COMMUNITY CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND MAPPING OF LOCAL PEACEBUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT COMMUNITY	<p>COMMUNITY-WIDE PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective perception of the UN • Understanding of peacebuilding and sustaining peace • Community-level conflict analysis (including both conflict drivers and peace mechanisms/factors), including those in need of psychosocial support <p>COMMUNITY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-wide perception and understanding • Demography (including information on marginalized populations) • Age and sex-disaggregated data • Language, culture and tradition (including communal calendar) • Previous and/or existing peacebuilding interventions (good practices and lessons learned) <p>OPERATIONAL SETTING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility (including ICT capacity) and safety/protection needs and existing/available local resources • Popular mode of communication
MAPPING OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS WORKING IN PEACEBUILDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of peacebuilding work • Gender and age of leadership and membership (among other possible factors which could be considered developing on what is relevant in the context to ensure diversity). • Previous and ongoing peacebuilding interventions with the UN and/or international, regional or national stakeholders (including funding sources and modalities) • Urgent peacebuilding needs and potential initiatives • Existing capacity and capacity needs • Possible risks for project implementation • Relationship with the UN/Government (including partnering Ministries)
INTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF THE UN'S FIELD CAPACITY FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal assessment of UN field missions and country teams' collective capacity for civil society engagement, including with women and youth-led organizations, against ongoing peacebuilding interventions.

Annex D

Figure 4: A Model of Community Engagement for Program Design and Implementation (source: Niederberger, 2019, p. 9)

FIGURE 1: WHAT DOES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LOOK LIKE IN THE PROGRAMME YOU ARE WORKING IN?



Annex E

Figure 5: The Relationship between Affected Communities and Humanitarian Response Workers (source: Niederberger, 2019, p. 13)

FIGURE 2: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFFECTED COMMUNITIES AND HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE WORKERS – A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

