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## Civil Affairs 2019 Newsletter

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### *Ongoing support to Civil Affairs components in the field*

2018 has been a critical year for peacekeeping. Against the backdrop of epochal reforms, which are reshaping the UN peace and security landscape, and a renewed commitment by the Secretariat and many Member States to peacekeeping - through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative – the work of civil affairs components remains at the core of successful peacekeeping.

Whether through the daily engagement of local communities by the Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) to further protection mechanisms that empower local populations, or by working hand in hand with host governments to extend the positive reach of state institutions.

The comparative advantage of Civil Affairs remains at the local level, contributing to the development of political solutions to address local conflicts and sustain peace and social cohesion.

In support of these efforts, the Civil Affairs team at Headquarters has focused throughout the year on strengthening guidance tools and

materials that can enhance the effectiveness of field operations, based on lessons learned and good practices.

In this regard, DPET issued in March a Practice Note on Community Engagement, now also available in French. The Note provides tangible advice and concrete examples to help peacekeepers develop cross-cutting and multi-disciplinary approaches to engage with local communities to better address their concerns, expectations and priorities, as well as a coherent messaging on actual scope and mandate of the Mission.

Extensive work has also been pursued together with several partners, and in particular with the German Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), to improve strategic prioritization and operational coherence at the Field Office.

This resulted in the development of the Strategic Action Matrix (SAM), a tool intended to design interventions that are informed by local conflict analysis and are aimed at addressing conflict drivers and at protecting civilians.

### *Social dialogue process leads to reduced community tensions and violence in North Kivu, DRC*

Following an increase of security incidents in Bwito chefferie in Rutshuru territory in North Kivu in 2017, caused by armed group activism leading to the displacement of communities, MONUSCO Civil Affairs launched a social dialogue process to promote peaceful coexistence between Hutu, Hunde and Nande communities.

Civil Affairs, local and traditional authorities, and civil society representatives conducted a series of community consultations between January and February 2018. The process culminated in a large meeting held in Kanyabayonga on 6 to 9 March with the participation of key communities' representatives and civil society. The participants agreed on key recommendations and committed to contribute to peaceful coexistence and support ongoing efforts to reduce the prominence of armed groups.

The social dialogue initiative and the deployment of civilian and military authorities helped to

reduce armed group activism and ethnic tensions. Communities resumed movement between villages as well as other joint activities such as the intercommunity markets. Importantly, the participation of traditional authorities in the process led to the reopening of the main customary office in the area.

In September, Civil Affairs and its partners followed on the impact of the dialogue initiative and held townhall discussions in multiple villages for over 1,155 persons including 246 women. The consultations revealed a positive impact manifested by the launch of additional stabilization activities, the return of about 70% of IDPs who had fled in 2017, and reduced cases of threats against civilians.

### ***Building trust across communities in Kosovo***

Over the past two years, UNMIK has recalibrated its strategic priorities to support grassroots trust-building initiatives that help replace pervasive negative narratives and promote real change. To this end, UNMIK

organized the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum in Ljubljana, Slovenia in May 2018.

More than 120 participants representing a diverse cross-section of Kosovo society gathered to exchange views and propose concrete solutions to build trust for a more peaceful and inclusive society. The Forum was significant for its unprecedented scale, scope and ambition, successfully bringing together for the first time, a large and diverse group of leaders to discuss practical trust-building measures and commit to a shared pathway toward a more inclusive society.

Its success represents the culmination of months of preparatory work by UNMIK Civil Affairs, including a series of focus group discussions with experts and communities.

The Forum also opened new channels of dialogue among diverse partners. The energy and momentum generated was harnessed in subsequent formal and informal interactions with participants, where they examined

the recommendations in more detail, suggested priority actions, and agreed to continue engagement and dialogue to implement the recommendations.

The consultations resulted in the identification of strategic interventions to advance trust-building with a variety of partners, through good offices, advocacy, and utilization of programmatic funding. These now form the foundation of UNMIK's Civil Affairs efforts to act as a steward of the process initiated in Ljubljana, and to advance collective efforts to support trust-building in Kosovo.

### ***Prevention of Electoral Violence in Kinshasa, DRC***

In support of efforts to combat electoral violence, MONUSCO Civil Affairs and civil society partners facilitated a series of sensitization campaigns to raise awareness and promote cooperation between the civil society, particularly the youth and local authorities in Kinshasa.

MONUSCO supported, twenty-nine campaigns throughout 2018, engaging - some 3,000 persons, including 1,000 women, in different neighborhoods. Several activities were also organized with a specific focus on vulnerable youth.

In October and November 2018, Civil Affairs partnered with the Cellule de Liaison Parlementaire de Province (CLPP), an inter-religious group and organized four forums that brought together for the first-time street youth (commonly called "Shégués"), municipal authorities and the national police in the La Tshangu, Funa, Mont Amb and Lukunga districts in Kinshasa. The platform presented an opportunity for 417 street youth leaders, including 141 women, and local authorities to



*Photo by UNMIK: Over 120 participants from a diverse cross-section of Kosovo society attended the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum, held in Ljubljana, Slovenia*





UN Photo/JC McIlwaine: Mediation workshop

meet in a neutral and safe place to share views.

The youth and the local authorities discussed issues of security and social cohesion and the role of youth in reducing political and electoral violence ahead of the December elections. They discussed best practices for peaceful elections and non-violent communication, improved confidence and relations between youth and authorities, which have often been characterized by a lack of trust. The usually marginalized youth, stressed the importance of this initiative in giving them an opportunity to exchange views and identify solutions with the authorities.

The youth expressed concern at the economic situation and the absence of basic social services. They also expressed their lack of trust in the security forces, denouncing police violations, harassment and arrests. The local authorities committed to follow up on the allegations and called on the youth to refrain from criminal and violent activities and work with the local authorities to prevent violence.

### ***Civil Affairs Builds Capacity of Women in Mediation and Negotiations in South Lebanon***

Civil Affairs in UNIFIL engage regularly with various community

representatives in identifying their needs and exploring ways in which the Mission could support a culture of peace. One such need expressed by women was to help them develop skills in negotiation and mediation, which would help them to effectively engage in

mediation processes.

In November 2018, Civil Affairs facilitated two training sessions conducted by an expert mediator working with UN Women for women activists from South Lebanon. Forty-Five women from different backgrounds, including municipal council members, professionals, teachers and heads of associations or cooperatives gathered in two of the largest municipalities in South of Lebanon, Tyre and Abbassiyah. They raised a variety of concerns that women routinely face, ranging

from problems and challenges in their domestic lives to prejudices and cultural practices that preclude full equality of women.

At the end of the sessions, the women were encouraged to join a new network of mediators in the South and several signed up for the same.

This network of women mediators will consist of women who have the skills and knowledge to effectively mediate in a variety of local conflicts. Such an initiative, while already existing in other parts of Lebanon, was missing in the Mission's area of operations. It is anticipated that this network of independent women mediators will contribute to improved accountability and transparency in functioning of governmental institutions and other bodies, notwithstanding gender challenges.

### ***Addressing root causes of conflict in East Darfur, Sudan***

More than ten years since the Darfur conflict began, many of the displaced communities have been unable to return to their homes of origin. In some areas of East Darfur displaced persons are



Photo by MONUSCO: Social dialogue process leads to reduced community tensions and violence in Bwito chefferie (North Kivu)

prevented from returning to their places of origin due to unresolved land issues, while in other areas, they are waiting for improved security and provision of basic services.

Despite increased efforts by the local government and Native Administration to support the voluntary return of displaced persons, many of them are unable to access their land as it is occupied by new settlers.

To address the land issues, the government in East Darfur, through a decree, amended the 1930 Land Acquisition Ordinance of Sudan by adding a “right to land restitution policy”. The right to land restitution policy provides an opportunity to people to reclaim and formalize land ownership rights through the formal courts.

In support of government efforts, in 2018, UNAMID’s Governance and Community Stabilization Section (GCSC)<sup>1</sup> and the East Darfur judiciary and El Daein University conducted nine sensitization workshops on the policy. Almost six hundred participants, including 136 women, representing herders, farmers, IDP communities, returnees, local government and native administration leaders attended.

The workshops were critical in creating awareness on land rights and procedures and the complexity of land issues in the State, which is aggravated by lack of information. The decision by the East Darfur government to implement the land restitution policy has been instrumental in supporting voluntary returns and durable solutions, especially as IDPs and refugees return to their homes of origin due to a relative

improvement of the security situation.

The initiative is a positive step in addressing the long-standing issues over land ownerships and use, which remains one of the root causes of conflict in Darfur.

### ***Restoration of State Authority in Central African Republic (CAR)***

Since September 2017, MINUSCA and the United Nations Country Team have been promoting a progressive and holistic approach

effective delivery of social services.

In 2018, MINUSCA helped the government to train and redeploy 16 prefects and 71 sub-prefects who are now operational throughout the country.

The launching and operationalization of the RESA national strategy is seen not only as a technical endeavor but also as a political exercise owned and led by the government and in which citizens are slowly seeing a change



*UN Photo/Blagoje Grujic*

under the leadership of the government to implement the Restoration of State Authority (RESA) national strategy.

It includes the redeployment of civil servants throughout the country, the rehabilitation and equipping of administrative buildings, the strengthening of national capacities and the mapping of the State presence and

in their day to day lives. In some parts of the territory, young generations are for the first time seeing the presence and functioning of government authorities in their subprefectures, as in Bambouti in the East, where the sub-prefect returned to the locality following 20 years of complete absence of a state official in the area. A recent mapping

<sup>1</sup> The Civil Affairs and Community Stabilization merged in January 2018 to become GCSC.



assessment in November 2018, which covered the western region, showed that 1,889 civil servants have been deployed.

### ***Establishment of Regional Reconciliation Support Teams in Mali***

Northern and Central Mali is

prevention, management and resolution of local conflicts. They also contribute to the establishment of a protective environment for civilians and in rebuilding trust between them and the State.

Throughout the process of operationalizing the RRSTs, Civil Affairs provided technical expertise, logistical support, resources mobilization, shared conflict mapping and analysis, facilitated community dialogue initiatives and supported the implementation of social cohesion projects that promote inclusiveness.

These efforts have had a positive impact, for example, in Timbuktu, Taoudeni, Menaka, Gao and Mopti regions, RRSTs have addressed intercommunal tensions primarily related to power struggles and conflicts between agriculturalists and pastoralists and prevented reprisal killings. While, country-wide, during the 2018 presidential elections, the RRSTs implemented a communication campaign that successfully defused tensions and avoided the escalation of elections-related violence.

### ***Supporting social cohesion in South Sudan***

In South Sudan, years of civil war have polarized communities along ethnic lines, leading to mutual mistrust and resentment. Since early 2018, Civil Affairs in UNMISS has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to promote social cohesion and reconciliation between ethnic groups, local populations and displaced civilians and with local authorities and communities.

Some of these activities include school-based peace campaigns; civil-military dialogues in conflict hotspots; peace



*Photo by UNAMID: Workshop on the right to land restitution policy*

A full report will be issued in February 2019. A similar mapping is being conducted in the center and eastern regions. The objective is to determine the exact number of civil servants operational throughout the country to identify and highlight critical gaps and advise the government on the need to adapt its deployment plans.

The effective presence of national authorities and civil servants throughout the country is a crucial element of the RESA national strategy and vital to rebuilding the social contract between the State and the population.

The strategy dictates the deployment of 6,500 civil servants throughout the 16 prefectures by 2020. Achieving this number of deployments will ensure the provision of basic social services to the population and promote better acceptance of a more effective State.

marred by a multitude of local inter and intra-communal conflicts, often linked to access to natural resources, power struggles and mobilization of communities around ethnic and clan divisions. The conflict drivers are further compounded by the absence or weakness of State authorities, insecurity and impunity, as well as increased presence of violent extremist groups. This has resulted in a vicious cycle of violence that undermines efforts to bring peace to Mali.

As part of MINUSMA's mandate to support Malian authorities' efforts to reduce intercommunal tensions, Civil Affairs is working with the Ministry of Social Cohesion, Peace and National Reconciliation to establish and train its Regional Reconciliation Support Teams (RRST).

These are a mechanism to foster community dialogue and engage local authorities, leaders and civil society representatives in the

caravans in towns and rural areas; cultural events featuring members of conflicting ethnic groups and dialogue and reconciliation initiatives.

For example, Civil Affairs organized a series of civil-military dialogues to promote relations between government and opposition forces, and local communities in Torit, Yei, Yambio, Malakal and Renk towns.

While in Wau, Malakal and Bentiu, Civil Affairs organized peace and cultural caravans involving IDPs living in the UNMISS PoC sites and the communities, providing a space for many in the two communities to come together since the outbreak of the 2013 civil war. They also provided a space for the communities and government authorities to openly address issues of intercommunal mistrust, particular the question of the occupation of the property belonging to IDPs.

Similar activities including sporting events were conducted in, Bunj, Yambio, Malakal, Torit, Bentiu, Akobo, Bor, Leer, Maridi and Raja towns. In Yambio and Torit, Civil Affairs, in collaboration with ministries of education, established school peace clubs to promote social cohesion between students belonging to different ethnic groups and sub-sections.

All these efforts, have created a momentum towards the effective implementation of the Revitalized-Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in

South Sudan which was signed in September 2018.

### *Building trust in the eastern part of Cyprus*

Civil society actors from both sides of the divided island of Cyprus have been working on building trust between the communities, namely between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, with the support of the international community for decades. However, most of these efforts circumscribed to Nicosia, the capital of the island.

Despite important achievements both civil society and the international community have recognized the need to concentrate their efforts outside the capital.

In support of these efforts, Civil Affairs intensified its support to intercommunal work in Pyla/Pile and the greater Famagusta Region.

Pyla/Pile is the only bi-communal village in the island and is in the

Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders as well as Civil Affairs organized several bi-communal activities.

In 2018, aiming to reach out to more groups, Civil Affairs initiated several meetings with women and youth in the village, which resulted in the women taking an active role in organizing bi-communal events.

The desire to see the Famagusta region re-united and its former 'glory' re-established spurred Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities to develop a grassroots movement which has been active in encouraging social cohesion

Building on these efforts, in collaboration with the Deryneia municipality, last spring, Civil Affairs supported a participatory process that resulted in the establishment of a community space in Deryneia, named 'Famagusta Avenue Garage'.



*Photo by UNFICYP Famagusta Avenue Garage*

buffer zone. Despite living together, the level of interaction between people is low. Over the years, communities in Pyla/Pile with support from the village's

The community space, which was partly renovated by Civil Affairs, aims to become an inclusive hub for creativity, innovation and education.