



# CIVIL AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER 2016



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## Thinking Politically, Engaging Locally!

The Civil Affairs Newsletter highlights the works of Civil Affairs Officers operating in various DPKO-DFS peacekeeping missions and showcases their stories from the field about the various innovative ways by which Civil Affairs Officers address challenges on the ground and implement the mission mandate in their daily activities. The field stories highlighted here are neither exhaustive of all the activities ongoing in the field, nor do they represent “best practices”. Instead, they are best understood as “practices that worked” in a particular context and time, which can be viewed as practices to improve upon and tailor in peacekeeping contexts to address similar local needs and challenges. The Civil Affairs Team hopes that these field insights and stories will also shed light on some of the challenges shared by our Civil Affairs colleagues around the globe and will help in future planning efforts to overcome similar or related obstacles with greater ease and confidence.

## Upcoming Events...

- ❖ 3-4 February, 2016, New York: Expert workshop on the development of community engagement strategies in peacekeeping settings
- ❖ July, 2016 (TBC), New York: Heads of Civil Affairs Workshop:
- ❖ Second Quarter 2016: roll-out of the Civil Affairs e-learning Course

## Perceptions Polling Project in Eastern DRC

**MONUSCO**

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) the Civil Affairs section in MONUSCO recently adopted an innovative approach to help ensure that peace consolidation activities undertaken by the Mission are sensitive to local perceptions of the ongoing conflict. It all began with a simple yet important idea: that local community engagement strategies for peace consolidation can be more effective if they are based on a more thorough and in-depth understanding of how communities perceive the conflict's impact on their everyday lives. After much brainstorming and planning, this idea blossomed into the “Project on Data Collection on Peace Consolidation and Reconstruction in the DRC”, later known simply as the “Polling project”.

The Polling project's overall goal is to provide an integrated framework of information and reliable analysis to Mission leadership on the consolidation of peace and reconstruction in the DRC. This analysis is used to support the Mission's operational and programmatic decisions, as well as support national public policy-makers and other international actors. The Civil Affairs section developed this project in partnership with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI), a US-based research centre with ample field data analysis experience in Africa, and UNDP. It also partnered with local Eastern DRC entities, including provincial ministries of justice and three local universities in order to ensure local ownership and longer-term sustainability of the project. Local researchers and university students will also receive training in data collection and analysis by Civil Affairs' technical partners to undertake future field data collection.

The scope of this innovative project is impressive. Between 2015 and 2017, 40 specially trained Civil Affairs Community Liaison Assistants (CLA) will have interviewed over 30,000 Congolese from different geographic background ranging from densely populated neighborhoods to small confined villages in Eastern DRC provinces. The interviews are based on a carefully formulated 150-item survey questionnaire that can offer a real time picture of local perceptions regarding issues of access to justice, evolution of the security situation over time, role of state agents in charge of security, MONUSCO's role in fulfilling the protection of civilian mandate, among many other related topics. The CLAs will upload all interviews in a comprehensive database that HHI will analyze on a quarterly basis to highlight emerging trends and/or changes in local perceptions to help the Mission better understand the impact of the conflict on local populations and develop better tailored community engagement strategies.

MONUSCO has played a critical role in the implementation of the Polling project through its ability to quickly deploy special trained CLAs across the Nation, to conduct surveys and collect reliable data for the project. The MONUSCO Civil Affairs team carefully recruited CLAs based on a specialized skill set, including qualities of empathy, respect, professionalism, ability to build trust with communities, work with local authorities, and maintain confidentiality, among others.



One of the main challenges that the Civil Affairs team and its partners worked hard to address is the development of a conflict-sensitive methodology for collecting this data in an objective manner. For instance, how do you help CLAs avoid unintentionally biased data collection based on their own personal opinions on the impact of the conflict on local communities? Or how do you ask questions that may be quite personal in nature without offending the interviewee while also guaranteeing his/her anonymity? The Civil Affairs team has worked closely with HHI to carefully address these methodological challenges through intensive conflict-sensitive training sessions for CLAs undertaking data collection activities.

The specially trained CLAs conducted their first successful round of interviews in March 2015. Initially, survey respondents received CLAs with mixed feelings, being both curious and suspicious as they opened their doors to a stranger. However, in general, despite initial hesitation, most respondents in the target audience were overwhelmingly interested in participating in the surveys once they understood the project's purpose. Indeed, responsiveness usually differs from urban to rural areas, thus requiring CLAs to be innovative and adaptive in applying different conflict-sensitive approaches to best suit the local context. The first quarterly reports with concrete trends are already available online for MONUSCO Civil Affairs and other mission components to better identify community engagement projects, where to develop QIP, and how to better utilize protection tools. This initiative provides the Missions with a powerful yet reliable tool to track developments in the perceptions of local communities and be able to deliver a more tailored and coherent response.

## Effective Community Engagement Strategy to Diffuse Tensions in Bangui, CAR

MINUSCA

September 4, 2015 marked the one-year anniversary of Civil Affairs' presence in the Central African Republic. Since its deployment, Civil Affairs has been working on reconciliation, social cohesion and dialogue to address the serious intercommunal dimension of the violence that stroke the country in 2013 and 2014. To implement its tasks as mandated by the Security Council to establish lasting peace and security in the CAR, Civil Affairs along with other elements of MINUSCA and the UN Country Team (UNCT) are fostering nonviolent change in communities, through the use of actions of intervention, by providing tangible, needed services to create incentives for non-violent behavior. One key example of this is the project in which Civil Affairs has been involved to reopen access to a cemetery in the Boeing district of Bangui (a predominantly Christian area of the city) to the Muslim community predominantly located in another neighborhood of Bangui.

In the wake of the crisis in 2013, large parts of the city became inaccessible to members of different communities and a key example of this dynamic was the lack of freedom of movement for members of the Muslim community in Bangui, which translated – among other things – in their inability to access to the cemetery in Boeing and bury their deceased. In an effort to address this situation, Civil Affairs, jointly with representatives from other MINUSCA sections, UNCT, the French Embassy, and in partnership with the national authorities, namely the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Reconciliation, and a coordination committee established by the government to address the issue of the cemetery in Boeing, launched a series of dialogue sessions between stakeholders in Boeing and in the predominantly Muslim area of Bangui known as PK5.

One key outcome from these discussions was the drafting of a non-aggression pact outlining the intention of the communities of Boeing and PK5 to live together in peace and to permit free circulation of people between the two areas and allow the Muslim community to access the Boeing cemetery. Civil Affairs officers played a significant role in assisting representatives from the two areas to negotiate and draft the pact and reach an informal agreement. In addition, MINUSCA and UNDP established income-generating activities and social cohesion projects in Boeing and PK5 to sustain the informal agreement and strengthen the relationship between the two communities for peaceful



coexistence.

Such linkage between political mediation, dialogue, and social resilience programs, done in cooperation with UNCT, national and local authorities, and other partners is a hallmark of Civil Affairs' work in CAR and a demonstration of its dedication to the integrated approach to stabilization that the UN has adopted in the country. While the crisis that broke out in Bangui in late September has set back the work on this project specifically and the larger effort to foster reconciliation more generally, Civil Affairs MINUSCA will continue to engage closely with communities in the country and draw on the tools and resources at its disposal to contribute towards a lasting peace in CAR.

## Pre-Electoral Municipal Forums for Information Sharing in Haiti

MINUSTAH

In the spring of 2015, MINUSTAH Civil Affairs in Haiti launched, with key national partners, its latest and largest round of pre-electoral municipal forums. Their purpose was to contribute to more peaceful and better-informed elections by acting as a locus for civic instruction and boosting state-society relations by bringing together key stakeholders from electoral candidates to officials to civil society groups in a controlled environment. Forums were held for all 140 of the country's communes, reaching 12,140 participants. Differently from previous rounds this time the Mission focused on promoting local ownership of the fora by the *Bureaux Electoraux Départementaux* and *Communaux* (respectively known as BEDs and BECs, the local arms of the Temporary Electoral Commission-CEP) for them to acquire confidence, credibility, and the necessary experience to replicate such initiatives in a post-MINUSTAH context. Greater local ownership could also contribute to more peaceful and stable elections by making manifest the idea that all stakeholders have a role to play in ensuring a secure and peaceful environment.

While the level of engagement by the local electoral councils varied from department to department, each forum has been developed around the presentation of the 2015 Electoral Law to local constituencies. In the South Department, an effort was made to include members of the police and judiciary to discuss the enforcement elements of the 2015 Electoral Law, while in the North West Department, the local MINUSTAH office had to take the lead in the presentation to compensate for the lukewarm engagement of local stakeholders. On the other hand, in Port de Paix (North West Department), the CEP itself attended the final forum, a powerful statement of intent and in the West, a 'mega-forum' for the Greater Port-au-Prince area was organized by the local BED. In the North West, upon finishing the forums, a special event, later broadcast on the radio, gave candidates to the lower chamber



the chance to answer voters' questions directly. In the South, three special forums were organized in partnership with the Ministry of Gender to focus on women's rights in the election. The long term impact of these Forums is yet to be determined; however, the eager participation of local constituencies to these kind of fora demonstrates the need to further develop political space for effective dialogue between citizens and their current and aspiring representatives.



## Addressing Inter-communal Conflict through Local Mediation Support in Darfur

UNAMID

UNAMID is mandated to support the initiatives of national and local authorities in Sudan to resolve local tensions and promote local reconciliation efforts. The active engagement and full involvement of Civil Affairs to support local mediation efforts at all levels of government has been persistent throughout Darfur. These efforts were critical in the de-escalation of the violent conflict between the Rezeigat and Habaniya tribes in July 2015. The local mediation support provided by UNAMID leadership and Civil Affairs has contributed greatly towards paving the way for an inclusive peace agreement in the region.

Tensions between the Rezeigat and Habaniya tribes erupted on March 24, 2015, when a cattle belonging to the Southern Rezeigat was stolen by the Habaniya, resulting in fighting between the two tribes on July 2015 in Al Sunta (South Darfur) locality. In mediation efforts, Civil Affairs and UNAMID leadership engaged with the local authorities, the leadership of both tribes and the local *Ajaweed* committee (traditional mediators) in Nyala and Al Sunta localities to explore means of stopping the fighting. The state government formed a reconciliation committee to mediate the conflict between the two parties and deployed a joint military and police force to prevent further fighting.

In an effort to harness stakeholder support for the mediation process, on July 16, the Civil Affairs Khartoum Team met with 12 prominent Habaniya tribal leaders including two Amirs (highly ranked leaders), a former Governor of South Darfur, and the Executive Director of the Kasha Center, to discuss the root causes of the conflict and efforts to resolve peacefully the conflict. Civil Affairs pleaded with the tribal leaders to take urgent actions to prevent further escalation, including working closely with the Governor of South Darfur State and the Commissioner of Al Sunta locality to reinforce a military and police presence in the area, create a buffer zone between affected villages and take steps to build trust and confidence among communities. Moreover, UNAMID leadership agreed to assist the tribal leaders with logistical support as well as facilitate humanitarian assistance for IDPs. In continuing mediation efforts, Civil Affairs held further series of meetings with local authorities and provided logistical support to facilitate travel for the Habaniya taskforce to Al Sunta locality mitigate the situation on the ground.

During local mediation support meetings, participants discussed a number



of important issues, including the implications of impunity; the urgent need for the Government of Sudan to enforce the rule of law and address individual criminal acts before they escalate into communal clashes; the need to strengthen traditional reconciliation mechanism to enable the Native Administration to function effectively; the support for tribal leaders on how to make the *Diya* (blood money) more beneficial and less of a tool of extortion; and vocational training for the *hakamat* (traditional singers) and *ageeds* (local tribal warrior leaders) as agents of peace instead of instigators of hatred and violence. Another important message was a request to the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) to remove any restrictions on UNAMID to allow humanitarian agencies to conduct inter-agency field missions. Overall, Civil Affairs support in proactively addressing the inter-communal conflict between the Southern Rezeigat and Habaniya through local mediation efforts strengthened the bonds of trust between the UN mission and the host community significantly, building the base for future cooperation.

## Supporting Women's Empowerment in Lebanon

UNIFIL

Throughout July and August 2015, UNIFIL Civil Affairs supported activities to improve living conditions for Lebanese women, including vocational training support for women's cooperatives, increasing women's participation in municipal affairs, and first aid training for women on treating domestic accidents.

Earlier in July, Civil Affairs supported rehabilitation of a building that houses a women's pottery cooperative in Rachaya Al Foukhar, the inauguration of which became the opportunity for a pottery exhibition that sparked growing interest among local authorities in supporting vocational training courses for women. This resulted in the commencement of vocational courses for women by the non-partisan, independent organization, SDC (Social Development Center) of Chebaa that was supported by UNIFIL Civil Affairs. That same month, Civil Affairs met with the head of the Regional Cooperative Union in South Lebanon, which has 42 member cooperatives focusing mainly on providing support to the olive oil sector, to promote women's cooperatives specializing in artisanal work. In Sector East Civil Affairs continued to meet with local officials, specifically the mayors of Khiam and Markaba to discuss vocational training support for women to improve their daily lives. The mayor of Markaba supported building a vocational centre for women. Civil Affairs discussed this idea with a non-profit Lebanese company specialized in helping conflict-affected communities build sustainable livelihoods, Besme Co, which then offered training in marketing and financing to women's groups.

In July, Civil Affairs also facilitated a women's workshop organized by the Lebanese Women Affairs Association to increase women's participation in municipal public administration. Attended by more than 70 women from Tyre Caza, the participants discussed the issues and challenges experienced by women in the political sphere given the socio-economic and cultural barriers faced by women and the presence of quotas number of women in public administration. In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) distributed



first aid treatment handouts to all women participants, in addition to information and training shared by FINIRISHBATT nurses and the Lebanese Red Cross DRR unit in Dibil on how to conduct intensive first aid training at home. Civil Affairs continued discussions with the Lebanese Red Cross to organize training in Ayn Ibil for women who attended an earlier awareness session. All these activities contribute towards paving the path for women's empowerment by helping them gain the information and skills necessary to support themselves.

## Building Trust between Local State Authorities and CSOs in Gardez, Afghanistan

UNAMA

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Afghanistan are now seen to be in a transition stage from traditional forums to modern organized groups, especially in terms of having established offices, clear visions and goals, regular operational staff and publications, such as magazines and newspapers, none of which existed even four years ago in most cases. Although the CSOs, particularly in Gardez in the southeastern region, have increasingly played a positive role in improving conditions for development, governance, and peace, they are yet to fully engage with local government authorities, resulting in minimal impact in reflecting local voices in the provincial planning process.

Noticing this weak relationship between the provincial council and CSOs in Gardez, UNAMA Civil Affairs initiated a project to bridge the gap between these two entities. Civil Affairs held individual discussions with local CSOs, the Provincial Governor's Office, the Departments of Justice, Information, Culture, Youth Affairs, and Women Affairs to better understand key drivers that divide the Provincial Councils and CSOs and to develop innovative ways to overcome this divide. Civil Affairs found that the main reason for this divide was the different political status of the two actors: The Provincial Council is an elected formal representative body and the CSOs consist of informal volunteer groups brought together by common ties and/or interests. However, discussions revealed that both CSOs and local authorities indeed recognize the need to develop better working relationships through a well-defined and systematic form of engagement that would serve the interest of both entities.

In order to ensure that these discussions result in constructive and solid working relationships between the two groups, UNAMA Civil Affairs and Strategic Communication Units (SCSU) used media-outreach funds to facilitate a one-day consultative meeting in April, which was attended by 50 participants, including the Provincial Governor's office, Provincial Council, local CSOs and other local stakeholders.

The participants actively brainstormed about how to formalize the establishment of a coordination mechanism between CSOs and the Gardez Provincial Council. The discussion resulted in the formulation of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) setting goals to guide collective work in the interest of the state and local communities. The MoU is composed of seven parts, including the legal framework, rationale, objectives, mutual accountabilities, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the implementation of MoU.



Abdul Wali sehi, deputy governor of Gardez lauded that the initiative as serving the interest of the people and building mutual trust between the government and the public. Sardar Khan Malangzoi, chairman of the PC, said *"The establishment of this partnership was the first-ever initiative in the country that will lead to bridging the current disconnect between the people and their elected representative bodies as well as ensuring the effective presence of both PC and CSOs,"*. Since then, the Gardez PC and local CSOs have started regular monthly meetings to discuss public grievances and seek solutions; in addition, they carry out joint monitoring visits to project activities and hold joint press-conferences on social and governance issues.

## Facilitating Conflict Prevention Workshops in Akot Payam, South Sudan

UNMISS

In March 2015, UNMISS Civil Affairs completed a conflict-mapping exercise that provides a comprehensive analysis of the root causes of inter-communal violence across South Sudan. The outcome identified cattle raids as a primary driver of inter-communal violence and displacement, and Civil Affairs is seeking innovative, bottom-up approaches to promote grassroots initiatives that will help sustain the peace in the region. For instance, in May this year Civil Affairs held a one-day workshop for cattle-keepers in Akot Payam of Rumbek East County to revive existing local conflict prevention strategies to address cattle theft.

Akot Payam is in a remote area of South Sudan with poor road conditions that become impassable during the rainy season and very little international presence. By organizing a local workshop Civil Affairs succeeded in helping cattle-keepers address the root causes of their conflict and work around traditional conflict-prevention measures to promote peaceful coexistence.

The cattle-keepers adopted a hands-on role in the workshop, which increased local ownership and accountability and generated a high degree of cooperation among the members of the communities. This in turn led to the decision to establish a special local court to trial all criminal cases and hold those sentenced to pay the traditional "blood compensation" accountable as well as to use *Gelweg* leaders, traditionally the highest ranked leaders in the area, as community police to identify and apprehend suspected cattle thieves and enforce the ban to brew and sale alcoholic beverages.

The most salient aspect of this community based-strategy was the fact that cattle-keepers previously inclined to resolve their conflict through violent means were able to reconcile tensions by following the established and agreed upon dispute resolution rules.





## Addressing Land-related Disputes in Côte d'Ivoire

UNOCI

In March 2015, tensions caused by the growing influx of migrants in the protected forest of Gouin Debe near the town of Bloléquin resulted in a wave of violence, leaving one dead, 15 injured and 189 persons displaced. In April, there were new clashes over land tenure, and this time eight people were killed (Burkinabés). The disputes were allegedly a setup to place Baoulés, Lobi and Burkinabés communities against each other, by exploiting the intense competition over land tenure. The Sous-Préfet of Bloléquin, overwhelmed by a situation which was escalating, requested UNOCI to intervene and facilitate comprehensive round-table workshop discussions to resolve tensions.

Knowing the gravity of the situation, and in order to avoid disruptions during the workshop, Civil Affairs engaged in a series of prior consultations with government partners in Abidjan to gain support for the workshop, including the Department of Forestry and Water Resources - the government authority in charge of forest exploitation (SODEFOR), and the Territorial and International Organization for Migration (IOM). This approach used by Civil Affairs helped highlight the plight of about 20,000 displaced people believed to be populating the degraded and insecure Gouin Debe forest, allegedly occupied by the Burkinabés, to state authorities.

Between 20 and 21 April, 200 local stakeholders, including the UNCT and government representatives, came together for the workshop and engaged in lengthy discussions to help clarify misconceptions, strengthen public awareness about land tenure law, and identify innovative ways to uphold accountability in adhering to the rule of law. The community identified several issues, including: the mass immigration of Burkinabés to the preserved forests in their village; the “anarchic” occupation of land by Ivoirians from other parts of the country; the complicity of youth, village chiefs and higher authorities; the lack of respect for land-related dispute settlements; the misinterpretation of land laws; the high cost to obtain land certificates; and the controversial issue of delimitation of villages. The “cadres” of the village were also said to fuel tensions by politicizing the dispute and manipulating the youth. The workshop also highlighted gender issues, noting that traditional customs exclude women from inheriting land property, whereas the 1998 land law clearly provides for gender equality.



The workshop resulted in a decision by the Department of Agriculture, supported by SODEFOR, to call for the eviction of all Gouin Debe forest occupants in adherence to the law. Other solutions proposed to address the above-mentioned challenges include controlling the migration flux, spreading information on laws related to chieftaincies and land, sensitizing people on the need to stop selling their communities' land, decreasing the cost of obtaining land certificates, involving women in dispute prevention and management, and enforcing women's rights to inherit and access land. A few days after the inter-communal dialogue, 1,000 people, including local authorities and community members, met at the sub-prefecture to identify concrete next steps. The spoilers leading the disturbances and putting communities against each other were named and shamed. The land dispute management committee was revitalized and began working on 27 April under the sub-prefect's direction.

To reinforce social cohesion and avoid further disturbance, Civil Affairs also held a series of workshops on chieftaincy and land-related laws in Bloléquin from 10 to 11 June. More importantly, tensions appear to have lessened after the workshop and no incident has been reported in the forest of Gouin Debe between 21 April and 30 June.

## Facilitating Inter-community Dialogue for Peace Consolidation in Mali

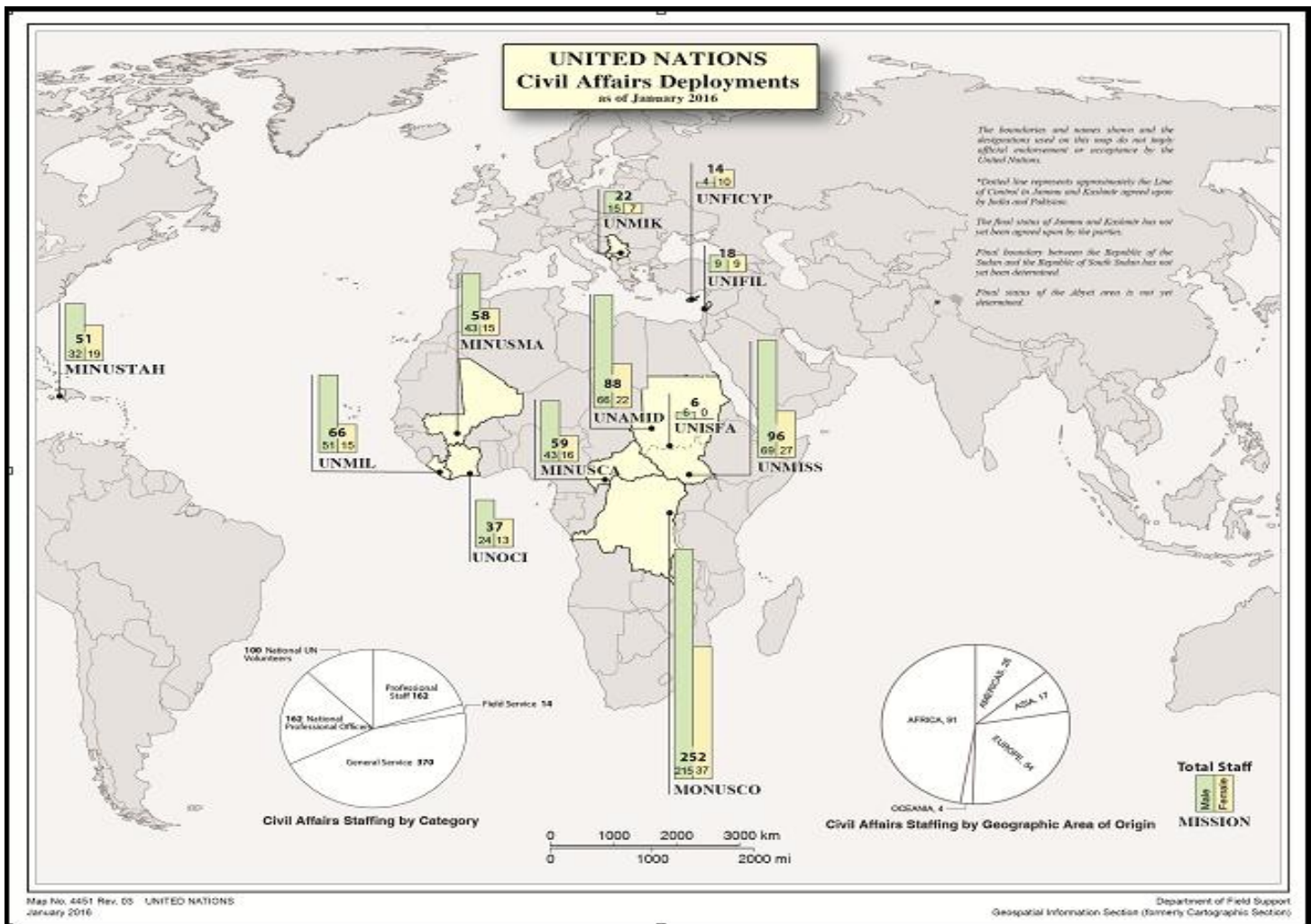
MINUSMA

Social relations between communities in Mali have been severely affected by intra-community tensions caused by land and chieftaincy disputes at the local levels. For example, tensions between the Omo village and the cercle of Koro led to tribal clashes between the two communities on 1 July 2015 that resulted in a number of deaths and the displacement of around 535 people. In its latest mandate, 2227 (2015) the Security Council stressed the need for dialogue among all the stakeholders in Mali to be promoted in an effort to support reconciliation and social cohesion.

MINUSMA Civil Affairs responded quickly by conducting a series of inter-community dialogues on peace consolidation in July 2015 in Asongo and Bourem Cercles, Commune of Bourra, and Gao. Over 200 people attended the workshops, 57 of whom were women, which is an impressive figure, considering previous low trends. Participants also included local administrative authorities, communal and traditional leaders, and NGOs. In expressing his views regarding future inter-community dialogues, the Prefect of Ansongo welcomed the Civil Affairs initiative and encouraged the local communities to unite, setting aside their differences in order to strengthen the peace process. The Mayor of Bourra also called for dialogue and reconciliation among the northern communities. All the players emphasized the critical needs for peaceful coexistence and popular mobilization for peace.



The inter-community dialogues were effective in raising awareness about the importance of peace and for mobilizing support from the community for early warning to prevent the menace of violence that has stained Mali since the beginning 2015



## Frequently Asked Questions about Civil Affairs

### Q. What do we mean by 'Civil Affairs' at the United Nations?

Civil Affairs is one of the fastest growing civilian components in UN peacekeeping, numbering today at about 750 officers deployed across 12 field missions. Civil Affairs Officers are civilian peacekeepers usually deployed at the local level, where they serve as the link between the UN mission and local authorities and communities. As the primary interlocutor for local communities and stakeholders, Civil Affairs Officers act as the eyes and ears of a mission throughout a host country. They advise military and police commanders on the ground; they link the work of the mission to that of the UN Country Team on local governance; they promote the creation of political space for dialogue and reconciliation; they support civil society; and they work alongside host government counterparts to strengthen their capacity as well as facilitate state-society relations. In each of these tasks, Civil Affairs Officers are more often than not the frontline early responders and early peacebuilders in UN peacekeeping operations.

### Q. What is the role of Civil Affairs in UN Peacekeeping?

Civil Affairs Officers facilitate the implementation of peacekeeping mandates sub-nationally and work to strengthen social and civic conditions necessary for peace. The 2008 Civil Affairs policy directive from the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support sets out three core roles performed by Civil Affairs, depending on the mission mandate and the evolving situation on the ground: (1) Cross-mission liaison, monitoring and facilitation at the local level; (2) Confidence-building, conflict management and reconciliation; and (3) Support to the restoration and extension of state authority

### Q4. What tools do Civil Affairs Officers have at their disposal to achieve their objectives and support implementation of the Mission mandate?

Overall, in the evolving environment of international peace and security, a key asset of civil affairs components is their agility, adaptability, and capacity to respond flexibly to the wide range of demands and expectations encountered in implementing Security Council mandates in local contexts. One aspect of this flexibility is their ability to prioritize their focus, depending on the availability and presence of other international partners at the local level, particularly those with expertise in highly specialized areas.

The Civil Affairs Newsletter is developed and distributed by the DPKO-DFS/DPET/PBPS/Civil Affairs team. For more information, please feel free to contact the Civil Affairs team at [dpko-civilaffairsnetwork@un.org](mailto:dpko-civilaffairsnetwork@un.org).