Engaging with Communities

The next challenge for peacekeeping

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Police Adviser for the African Union – United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) goes on patrol in Zam Zam Camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) near El Fasher, North Darfur, Sudan. 20 October 2010. UN Photo/Olivier Chassot.

Civilians in countries ravaged by armed conflict continue to bear the brunt of ongoing hostilities, and both governments and international peacekeeping operations are too often failing to prevent atrocities. Efforts made by peacekeeping missions in conflict-affected regions, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and southern Sudan, show that it is possible to do more, even within existing constraints. But much more needs to be done. While there is no substitute for political will, peacekeeping missions can save lives by engaging more effectively with the communities they are trying to protect.

Summary

The protection of civilians from the worst ravages of war is a dilemma that international bodies have sought to address for decades. However, despite lessons learned from the atrocities of Rwanda and Srebrenica, among others, civilians are still not only adversely affected by armed conflict; they are too often directly targeted.

Ultimately, national governments must have the will and capacity to protect their citizens, and nationally driven peace building and security sector reform processes need to be supported more than ever. In the interim, international peacekeeping remains a critically important and unique tool for protecting civilians and can mean the difference between life and death for thousands of vulnerable people.

Where governments are unable or unwilling to fulfil their responsibility to protect civilians, peacekeeping operations may be mandated to provide direct protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. In such circumstances, communities have a legitimate expectation that the presence of peacekeepers means that they will be protected. Failures by governments or peacekeepers to protect civilians, when they do occur, come at an enormous human cost.

Protecting civilians is no easy task, in particular, when violence is ongoing, numbers of peacekeepers and resources at their disposal are limited, and the most vulnerable communities are located in remote, isolated areas. The absence of interpreters, including female interpreters, makes it difficult to understand the concerns of communities and to effectively address the specific needs of women and children.

These challenges are further compounded by the inconsistencies in interpretation of civilian protection mandates and practices on the ground across peacekeeping missions. The understanding and commitment to protection of civilians varies widely from one senior in-country mission leadership to another. At the field level, individual battalions vary enormously in their willingness to engage with communities and to take robust action, and too often civilian staff is unwilling to be based in remote or isolated communities. A lack of clear guidelines and poor training and preparation of personnel means that too many peacekeeping units arriving to their country of deployment do not know what protection of civilians means or how it is to be delivered.

Moreover, international peacekeeping is coming under increasing pressure, with barriers arising to the daily performance of missions' work and even, as in Chad, to their presence on the ground. Too often, peacekeeping missions cannot rely on systematic political backing from the UN Security Council to ensure that they are able to perform effectively and to access politically sensitive locations.

UN peacekeeping reform processes acknowledge many of these problems and are currently looking at how to 'meet the challenges of today and tomorrow',[1] including how to ensure peacekeeping mandates translate into 'effective efforts on the ground'.[2] Efforts are being made to address the need for clear direction to peacekeeping missions in fulfilling their mandate to protect civilians. Recent Security Council resolutions have stressed the protection of civilians should be a priority for peace keeping missions,[3] and have focussed on specific steps towards that goal as well as assessment and implementation of best practices.[4]

Despite these laudable initiatives, impact is slow to be felt on the ground by those who need it most – be it a Congolese woman in the Kivus or a Sudanese woman in Darfur. Yet, the perspective most often missing from discussions on protection of civilians has been that of the very people the peacekeepers are mandated to protect. Communities are the most qualified to assess the impact of peacekeepers' work on their own safety, have the most to gain from the successes, and the most to lose when missions fall short. Despite this, affected communities are rarely involved in the design, implementation or assessments of UN peacekeeping missions.

This report aims to support efforts to improve peacekeeping missions' efforts to better protect civilians. It highlights how engagement with communities is critical to managing expectations, to building trust between peacekeepers and communities and to ensuring peacekeepers are better able to understand and respond to threats to civilians in a given location. The nexus between the international community's efforts to protect civilians and the people who need their protection is often in remote and isolated locations; this report therefore reviews a number of recent initiatives undertaken by peacekeepers that show promise in improving communication between peacekeepers and communities and in the protection of civilians, and identifies the key factors that influence their success or failure in the eyes of communities.

The study draws on Oxfam's extensive protection experience and presence in conflict-affected communities. It is supported by field-based research in southern Sudan and the DRC, including interviews and focus group discussions with women and men in affected communities.

Trying to address what communities want and need

Communities interviewed were united in their desire for more dialogue and communication with peacekeepers. Without this dialogue, peacekeeping missions miss crucial information and may lose the trust of the population. Communities, humanitarians and peacekeepers have therefore welcomed the inclusion of Community Liaison Interpreters who build relations with communities and help peacekeepers to better understand the concerns of the local population.

Initiatives that seek to improve civilian protection include different types of patrols – night patrols, market patrols, firewood patrols – which communities indicate are highly valued. For example where the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo, MONUSCO, started conducting patrols along a dangerous road to a market in north Kivu, hundreds of people were once again able to go to market to sell and buy produce in safety.[5] Similarly, firewood patrols conducted by peacekeepers in Darfur allowed hundreds of women at risk of attack to collect firewood more safely.

Emergency hotlines, trialled in DRC and Chad, which enable communities to directly call peacekeeping bases have also facilitated better communication between communities and peacekeeping missions. While there have been teething issues, communities have indicated their support for this initiative.

Some missions have endeavoured to develop mechanisms to better obtain and share information for more effective analysis of threats. These include the use of Joint Protection Teams, which bring together civilian and military personnel, and reporting matrixes. There have also been efforts to combat impunity through Joint Verification Teams. The peacekeeping mission in Chad (MINURCAT), which has now withdrawn under government pressure, provided support to a community police force (the DIS), with some communities reporting that they felt safer as a result of its presence. MINURCAT's efforts in strengthening local police forces also have important lessons for wider security sector reform efforts.

These initiatives have had mixed success on the ground, but those that communities perceive to be most effective in improving their security have a number of common characteristics. These include:

- responding to direct requests from communities or to specific identified protection needs;

- developed by peacekeepers on the ground to address specific needs and gaps, often in consultation with communities;

- creating links between communities and peacekeepers, and between peacekeepers and other actors in the field;

- obtaining, channelling, and using information effectively; and

- combining the strengths of a variety of actors (civilian and military, humanitarians and communities) to make best use of the different skills and capacities that they bring to the task.

Recommendations to improve protection of civilians by peacekeepers

The initiatives discussed in this paper demonstrate that much-needed, concrete steps are being taken to improve the protection of civilians, but these initiatives have had mixed success and met with mixed reviews from communities. Much more needs to be done to maximise peacekeeping missions' effectiveness in protecting the most vulnerable people from violence. Even within existing constraints, there is more that peacekeeping missions can do today to enhance their ability to protect civilians. Providing effective protection in the

field requires an ongoing dialogue between initiatives developed in the field, and their evaluation, development and institutionalisation from the top.

- Peacekeeping missions must engage communities from the earliest phases of preparation for deployment and must continue through the life of the mission.

- Missions must ensure that different parts of the mission (civilian, military, police) work together effectively. At the field level, there must be civilian personnel of sufficient seniority that their input and recommendations will be heeded.

- Missions need to develop public communications strategies to ensure that communities are aware of the role, activities, and limitations of the mission.

- UNSC must demand accurate assessments of achievement. Such assessments should be based on measurable indicators. Communities' perception of their own safety is a critical measure of how effective protection strategies are[6] and should be incorporated into these assessments.

- The UNSC must be prepared to provide robust political support to enable missions to access vulnerable communities and to fulfil their civilian protection mandate.

- UN member states need to allocate adequate human and technical resources to support measures for protection of civilians.

- DPKO needs to ensure appropriate recruitment (in particular of women) as well as training and deployment of civilians in the field.

- Missions must ensure that tools and initiatives developed and/or implemented at field level have clear objectives and include mechanisms for measuring impact, including through consultation with the community. These should be evaluated so they can be appropriately adapted to other relevant contexts.

- DPKO needs to institutionalise and systematise best practices and ensure necessary resourcing for these to continue.

1 Introduction

As the research for this paper was being completed, news was released of yet another mass atrocity in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In North Kivu, over the course of just a few days in late July/early August 2010, at least 303 civilians were systematically raped; houses and shops looted; and 116 civilians were abducted and submitted to forced labour. Both the government forces and the UN peacekeeping mission – with a base roughly 30km away – failed to prevent the atrocities.[7]

The past few years have witnessed an unprecedented surge in the deployment of UN peacekeeping missions with a protection of civilians mandate; there are currently more than 120,000 people working for the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), deployed in 16 DPKO-led operations worldwide, with a budget of nearly $8bn a year. Despite the massive scale of investment, however, incidents like the one in the DRC, while perhaps not routine, are far from uncommon.

There is a range of factors that contribute to a peacekeeping mission's weaknesses in protecting civilians. These include human and technical resource limitations, unclear guidance on the use of force, lack of clear guidelines on protection of civilians, mal-adapted deployment strategies, and issues related to the training, preparation, and caveats of troop-contributing countries.

Cognisant of these challenges and with a view to ensuring missions are able to prevent and respond to such horrific incidents as the mass rapes in the DRC, the DPKO is developing doctrinal guidelines and handbooks,[8] and in 2009 launched the 'New Horizon' process to assess and address the major dilemmas facing UN peacekeeping.[9] This process and current debates within DPKO, the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the UN General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping (C34 Committee) have focussed on a wide range of issues, including exploring alternatives to peacekeeping and moving beyond peacekeeping to peace-building, the importance of host state consent for peacekeeping missions, and supporting security sector reform (SSR).

National governments have ultimate responsibility for protecting their citizens, and building the capacity and will of national armies and police forces to keep their population safe is paramount. But the reality is that, in many contexts, national security actors are as yet unable to provide that protection, and are sometimes themselves a source of abuse. In the interim, international peacekeeping has a critical role to play in keeping civilians safe. Even within existing constraints, peacekeeping missions can and must do much more to robustly protect civilians.

Unfortunately, the perspectives of those most affected by violence – ordinary women, men and children – are invariably the least heard. An important ingredient in improving protection is effective engagement with communities. Without it, peacekeeping missions miss information crucial to fulfilling their mandate and risk losing the trust of the population, alienating missions from the very people they are there to protect. Such engagement is crucial at every stage of a mission's life: from design, to implementation, to exit strategy.

This paper aims both to solicit communities' perspectives on peacekeeping missions with civilian protection mandates and, through their experience, to better understand the extent to which initiatives adopted by peacekeeping missions improve engagement with communities and, in so doing, improve the protection of civilians.

A number of missions have put initiatives and approaches in place to more effectively engage with communities with a view to providing stronger civilian protection. But these have been largely driven by determined individuals and are specific to individual missions. In a positive trend, best practices are increasingly being transferred from one mission to another, however the process of institutionalisation is far too slow. Crucially, there are virtually no measures in place for evaluation, and little accountability.

There is no 'magic bullet' for protecting civilians, and mechanisms must be adapted to the national and local context, but Oxfam emphasises the importance of institutionalising systems that work. To help build this institutional knowledge, this study sought out those ways of working that were judged by communities to have had the greatest impact on their protection.

This report is based on field research and on Oxfam's extensive field experience. Its findings are the result of more than 70 interviews in southern Sudan and the DRC with representatives of local and regional government, civil society, local NGOs, police, and military, as well as both civilian and military representatives of peacekeeping missions, UN humanitarian programmes and agencies, and international NGOs.[10]

2   Protection of civilians 101 – the basics

Defining the task

Primary responsibility for the protection of civilians lies with the state, and peacekeeping missions are almost invariably given their mandate to protect 'without prejudice to' the state's responsibility.[11] The presumption implicit in the deployment of a peacekeeping mission, however, is that the government is either unable or unwilling to fulfil this responsibility alone.

In its broadest definition, protection encompasses a wide array of activities, many of which do not fall within the remit of peacekeeping missions. Because of this, it has been a challenge for peacekeeping missions to come to grips with precisely what it means to provide 'protection of civilians' in the field. The challenge is that much greater because of the number and variety of actors involved in different aspects of protection work. These include those with specific mandates, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN Children's Fund, as well as national and international NGOs whose work may include protection in a variety of ways.

While the united efforts of all of these actors hold tremendous potential for protection of civilians, the reality is more complicated. Peacekeeping missions face great difficulties in defining their own role, and coordination of protection-related activities with such a wide array of different actors is an enormous task in itself.

Most of what I hear is, 'we have not been mandated to do this'. What are you mandated to do? Stand by and watch?

Interview with man in Rumbek, southern Sudan, July 2010.

Through the *Operational Concept on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, the DPKO and the Department of Field Support (DFS) have given missions an important basis for understanding the implementation of their protection mandate. In line with its guidance, many missions now have or are developing mission-wide protection strategies, which normally include a working definition of protection of civilians. However, ensuring that it is read and understood by mission staff still requires considerable effort at many levels. In southern Sudan, for example, the mission is only slowly beginning to understand that protection of civilians is not just part of its mandate, but a priority.[12] In the DRC, most mission staff identified the protection of civilians as a prioritized part of their mandate, but some of those interviewed were not aware of mission-level guidance or how it related to their own role.

Responding robustly

Today the majority of peacekeeping missions with a mandate to 'protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence' are authorized under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, which allows them to use force not only in self-defence, but also in the fulfilment of this portion of their mandate.[13] This creates a crucial distinction between peacekeeping missions and other protection actors, in that they are "...generally the only international entity responsible for playing a direct role in the provision of protection from physical violence."[14] This unique role creates enormous expectations, which peacekeeping missions have been largely unable either to meet or to manage effectively.

They don't attack the enemies of the people. They just make a lot of noise and drive around. Why don't they take real action?

Community Leader, Kiwanja, July 2010.

Communities expect that peacekeeping missions will take robust action to protect them. When this fails to occur, they are disappointed. When it fails to occur on numerous occasions, disappointment turns rapidly to resentment and even hostility. In the words of a Harvard Kennedy School of Government report, '[u]ninterrupted mass atrocities are rarely forgotten. Failing to prevent them or intervene to stop them will be long remembered'.[15]

Credibility is essential, because the ability of a peacekeeping mission to accomplish its mandated tasks – whether as a deterrent to armed groups or as a mediator at political levels – relies on the perception of the mission's strength and integrity. Once credibility is lost, the work of the mission becomes immeasurably harder.

The importance of political will

Protecting civilians is a challenging task in any context, but becomes infinitely more complicated when state commitment to protection is lacking or when state actors are themselves the perpetrators of violations against civilians.

Consent of the parties to the presence of the peacekeeping mission within the conflict is one of the core principles of peacekeeping, yet increasingly peacekeeping missions are confronted with situations where consent is tenuous, and where host states erect barriers to external protection actors. These can range in severity from tacit withdrawal of consent — such as the bureaucratic impediments that have at times rendered UNAMID virtually unable to act in Darfur[16] – to its explicit withdrawal and the premature drawdown of the mission, as with the recent decision of the government of Chad not to renew the mandate of MINURCAT, and the similar threat on the part of the government of the DRC with regard to MONUC.

In southern Sudan, where the authorities are relatively collaborative, UNMIS has been denied access to areas considered 'sensitive' by the government. In Abyei, in 2008, this led to disastrous results, and recent restrictions on access to Khorfulus in Jonglei State, among others, indicate that the situation has not substantially changed.[17] In Darfur the mission has been so challenged that it has been referred to as operating

under a "siege mentality" with "a tendency to only operate when the Force has the permission of the parties (including [Government of Sudan])".[18]

The challenge of providing protection in a state of illusory consent is further complicated when government security forces are among the most serious perpetrators of violations. This has been the case in each of the mission areas examined in this study, and all four are struggling to find ways to address these problems.[19]

In a number of countries, missions either fail to take a firm stand when faced with government obstructions, or restrict their own activities for fear of angering the host state. It takes unquestionable courage to challenge or resist a hostile host. More critically, it requires solid political backing from the UNSC that mandated the mission, as well as from higher political levels in the mission. Both of these qualities must be summoned up, however, when a failure to take a stand means failing civilians at risk.

Despite the many criticisms of the security forces of host states, there is no question that effective protection cannot take place without them. Peacekeepers do not have the capacity or the mandate to secure entire territories. Moreover, there are plentiful – if rarely cited – examples of security forces fulfilling their responsibilities with courage and conviction. Investment in capacity-building and reform of the security sector is therefore vital for long-term protection of civilians.

3

Protection in practice – some bright ideas

The initiatives and approaches discussed below have been implemented by different missions to improve their capacities to detect and respond to protection threats. These were selected on the basis of positive reviews either from the local community, from the mission, or from other humanitarian actors, and do not represent an exhaustive list.

As a general note, many of these initiatives have so far been implemented only in a limited number of locations. The result, therefore, is that – for the moment – they do not answer the call made in virtually every community interview conducted during this study for a greater protection presence in remote and isolated areas.

Patrols that protect

Patrols can function as a deterrent to violence or crime, and provide a sense of security to communities. However, this is only possible if both perpetrators and communities are convinced that those patrolling are aware of what is happening and will intervene. Peacekeepers are often unfamiliar with both the terrain and the culture of the places where they are working; communication with the population is the best tool that they have to make their intervention effective.

Complaints commonly heard about patrols conducted by peacekeeping missions are that they:

- Stay on main roads or in safe areas, and do not make an effort to go into more volatile areas;

- Do not stop to speak with people during the patrol;

- Pass through areas too quickly to really see what is going on;

- Are too heavy, conducted by soldiers who remain in their vehicles, from which they are isolated from their environment; and

- Are not strategically planned or targeted, but conducted on the basis of routine and purely to make up numbers for reporting purposes.[20]

Communities interviewed in the course of this research valued patrols, but were united in their desire for more dialogue and communication. Such discussions cannot be limited to the local government authority, chief, or other designated official. While protocol cannot be ignored, these individuals may not adequately represent the concerns of all members of the community, nor will they share information with all community members. Even if it is impossible to speak to every person on the road during a patrol, mission personnel should make extra efforts to speak with members of the community and to have separate, formal meetings with women. Such meetings can also help identify where targeted interventions such as firewood, harvest, or market patrols may be needed.

I was travelling to work in a vehicle with a lot of other people and we were held up by looters. Just afterwards, a MONUSCO patrol went by. I waved at them to stop, but they just waved back. What did they think I was doing there in the middle of nowhere...just saying hello?

Woman in focus group, Kiwanja, August 2010.

UNMIS came and slept here. They stayed for three days. We don't know what they were doing here. They only spoke to the Commissioner.

Focus group, Lakes State, southern Sudan, July 2010.

In the DRC, for example, MONUSCO currently conducts patrols on a weekly basis on the road from Pinga to Kashuga market in North Kivu. Attacks on this road had severely restricted access to the markets, and the patrols allow hundreds of people to move in greater safety there and back.[21] Similarly, firewood patrols conducted by peacekeepers in Darfur allowed hundreds of women at risk of attack to collect firewood more safely.

Firewood patrols in Darfur, however, were not always successful. There were frequent misunderstandings between the women collecting firewood and the peacekeepers escorting them. Women were, on occasion, put at risk when peacekeepers did not show up, left early, or did not provide guidance on what to do in case of attack. To resolve the problems, a process was put in place which involved the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for patrols, in consultation with the community and organisations working in the community; formal communication mechanisms between the peacekeepers and the women (ad hoc and routinely scheduled); and consultation mechanisms with other actors in the environment, such as NGOs working in IDP camps.[22] Unfortunately, this process was not adopted across the board and, due to high turnover and poor institutional memory, new units were unaware of the initiative.

Finally, communities in both the DRC and southern Sudan have particularly expressed their appreciation for joint patrols between peacekeeping missions and national forces.[23] These allow peacekeepers to build capacity in national forces while curbing abuses, and national forces often have more mobility and a better understanding of the environment.[24] In implementing these, peacekeeping missions must take care to consult the community, however. The involvement of national forces in firewood patrols in Darfur, for example, was highly controversial, as they were feared by the women they were escorting.

Recommendations

- Communities should be consulted to ensure that patrols target areas where people are at greatest risk and where patrolling can facilitate or promote greater freedom of movement and access for communities.

- Procedures should be agreed upon with communities for how such patrols will be conducted and to explain what participants can expect.

- Patrols should always be accompanied by at least one language assistant and communication with the community should be a priority. Separate, formal meetings should be held with women wherever possible.

- Where possible and appropriate, patrols should be conducted jointly with national security forces.

Understanding community concerns through Community Liaison Interpreters

Community Liaison Interpreters (CLIs) were first deployed in the DRC by MONUC in April 2009. The rationale for the deployment was to 'address the MONUC mandate to protect civilians, ... extend the reach of the [Joint Protection Teams], and ensure the continuity of their work by facilitating the interaction and confidence building between MONUC military and local communities and measure the impact of MONUC protection activities'.[25] These are very high expectations for a position whose first responsibility is listed as '[a]cting as interpreter for the [Company Operating Base] Commander'.[26]

CLIs in the DRC are Congolese nationals. They report directly to the Civil Affairs Section of MONUSCO, but are generally co-located with the military in the field. Critically, there are very few female CLIs – only two in North Kivu, for example – and none are based permanently in the field.[27]

The military in both of the peacekeeping bases visited were extremely enthusiastic about CLIs, stating that they were the 'pillar of communication' and gave them the 'pulse of the community'.[28] Some contingents, however, have been less welcoming, and where this has been the case, the CLI's ability to make a difference is greatly reduced.[29]

In the communities visited, community leaders were unaware of the CLIs when they were described by title, but often knew them by name. Both host communities and IDPs, where a separate site existed, reported seeing the CLIs frequently and said that they had regular interaction with community leaders. Their feedback was that the presence of the CLIs had made an enormous difference in terms of their capacity to communicate with the mission. When asked how, they explained that it was first and foremost a question of language, but also of knowledge and understanding of the context.

The role of the CLI is tenuous, and its efficacy relies almost entirely on their capacity to gain acceptance both from the military and the community. CLIs and military personnel are able to identify some of the key elements to making their relationship work. One of these is prior training for the military in protection of civilians, followed by specific guidance to ensure that they understand the CLI's role and how it complements and informs their own activities. Because the CLI is often perceived as being an 'outsider' to the military contingent, members of the unit will look to the commander to set an example of how involved they should be in the life of the base and the activities of the contingent. Early, public validation of their role can make an enormous difference.

There is also pressure from the community, as in Kiwanja, where a CLI reported that the community had 'tested' him early on by asking for a public apology from the mission for its failure to intervene in the massacre of 2008.[30] He relayed the message, but the apology did not come.[31] It is not clear whether this had an impact on his credibility, but

it seems inevitable that if messages relayed by the CLIs are consistently ignored, they will lose the confidence of the community and with it any positive impact.

Finally, CLIs do not reach the entire community. Although they are provided with transportation and can accompany patrols, it was reported at both sites that sometimes logistics constrain their movement. CLIs appeared to speak primarily with community leaders rather than with the community at large. This fact, coupled with the lack of female CLIs, means that a significant number of voices are still not being heard.

The perception of both the mission and the community in the sites visited was that CLIs have been a positive innovation by bridging a linguistic and cultural gap. But do they have a positive impact on protection?

To the extent that any increase in understanding of the context is an improvement, CLIs are undoubtedly an asset. Their value is two-fold: first they provide a direct link between the military and the community, which enables the opportunity for sharing of information and builds trust. Secondly, they provide detailed reporting to Civil Affairs, which can be included in its protection analysis. However, the relatively isolated nature of the position and the limited number of CLIs means that there is considerable control over the information that is transferred, and the potential for abuse of power.

The positive response to the presence of CLIs by both the community and the military contingent confirms the need for a civilian staff presence in peacekeeping bases. While CLIs are an asset in terms of facilitating ongoing engagement, in a crisis their capacity to influence decision-making would be substantially hindered by their lack of seniority. CLIs may therefore be a welcome addition to, but not a replacement for, more senior civilian representation at field level.

Recommendations

- An adequate number of CLIs should be deployed in all areas with peacekeeping mission bases. The number should be determined based on an assessment of population size, the number of different communities (e.g. the presence of separate IDP sites, different ethnicities, etc.), and the amount of travel required to reach remote locations. Female CLIs should be deployed to the field, in sufficient numbers to ensure a presence both at bases and on field visits and patrols.

- The role and expectations of CLIs should be clear. Ideally they should neither be considered a replacement for the presence of more senior civilian staff at field level, nor relegated to the role of language assistant.

- Missions should provide concrete guidance to military contingents on how CLIs are to be integrated into their contingent. Interviews with military personnel and CLIs can help provide 'best practices', and commanders should be encouraged to set an example for their units.

- CLIs should be actively and continuously supervised to ensure that they are reaching as much of the community as effectively as possible.
- Systems should be established to reduce the possibility of abuse of power. Triangulation and cross-referencing of information – which Civil Affairs staff state is already being done – should be systematized.

Calling for help – emergency hotlines

Emergency call centres – known as surveillance centres in the DRC – are a relatively new innovation. In the DRC they were piloted in Kiwanja in North Kivu in 2009, and have reportedly since been replicated elsewhere in the Kivus.

Emergency call centres have also been established in Chad, under the auspices of the Détachment intégré de sécurité (DIS),[32] with MINURCAT support.[33] Now that MINURCAT is drawing down, efforts are being made to maintain the DIS. [34]

In the DRC they are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The telephone connects directly to the peacekeeping base, and is supported by a quick response team on standby for immediate dispatch.[35] The number is widely disseminated, and anyone can call it. Services are free, as callers can 'flash'[36] the number and the call will be returned.

In the DRC, the general perception of this tool in the communities where it had been implemented was positive, although reviews of its efficacy varied. The local population reported that they were generally able to reach someone, although the telephone could go unanswered for long periods of time and language was sometimes a problem. They stated that the mission did respond, though sometimes not with sufficient speed. Their perception was that calls were responded to more rapidly at night than during the day, perhaps because the peacekeeping base is, in general, less busy at night.

There were several flaws in the dissemination strategy. Military peacekeepers explained that the number is provided to community leaders for broader dissemination. However, these leaders seem to keep it for themselves or discourage members of the community from calling, as they prefer them to report first to the local hierarchy. Women in focus groups complained that the number was given only to associations or groups and community leaders, and that it should be distributed more broadly.

The Public Information Officer (PIO) at the base in Kiwanja dismissed concerns, stating that 'everyone had the number', but discussions with the community indicated that dissemination needs to be an ongoing process. Community representatives pointed out that telephones are often stolen, for example, or new ones purchased. Men in a focus group said that they had removed the number from their own telephones, believing that it had belonged to a particular individual who had since left.

Telephone hotlines are not a perfect tool. If the network is down, the system is rendered useless and some networks limit calls to users of the same network. Community members pointed out that you must have a telephone and at least some credit in order to place a call, and that this is a particular limitation for women. They added that often in a security incident the first thing that is looted is the telephone. Finally, many locations in places like the DRC, southern Sudan, and Chad – where protection concerns are greatest – do not have network coverage.[37]

A final concern that was raised was the confidentiality of the information received. The surveillance centre is located in a room that is apparently readily accessible at all times to facilitate access by language assistants. The implication, however, is that any information entered into the logbook can also be read by anyone present on the base. This could be a serious problem if information of a sensitive nature – such as the identities of victims of sexual violence – is entered in the book.

Surveillance systems of this kind represent a positive effort to make the mission more accessible and more responsive to emergencies. The very significant constraints of the environments in which missions are working, however, mean that these cannot be relied upon as the sole alert system. It is also crucial that they are not considered a replacement for a more complete early warning system or as a substitute for analysis.

Recommendations

- Telephone hotlines should be established in the peacekeeping bases to allow civilians and local authorities to contact the mission quickly.

- A solid communications strategy is required for dissemination of the telephone number and explanation of the system. Specific strategies must be used to reach the broader community, and women in particular.

- Systems for handling confidential information should be put in place to ensure that callers are protected from any possible repercussions.

- Expansion of the system should be based on an analysis of risk, with the most vulnerable locations given highest priority. As these areas are also most difficult to access, response scenarios should be established before the system is made available to the community.

- An analysis should be done of similar systems established in different countries identifying best practices to ensure that the emergency call centres are effective, and to help in their institutionalisation across peacekeeping missions.

Encouraging mission–wide engagement in the protection of civilians – the establishment of Joint Protection Teams

Joint Protection Teams (JPTs) were established in the DRC in February 2009, and are reportedly also being implemented by UNMIS in southern Sudan. JPTs consist of military contingents and staff of various civilian components, and are generally deployed to address specific issues. The duration of deployment is typically for a period of a few days to a week.

JPTs are briefed by the Commander of the Company Operating Base in whose area of operations they have been deployed. They debrief with the Commander on return to provide analysis of the area visited and to pass information for further follow-up (the establishment of patrols, for example). A joint report is produced by all members of the team, which includes recommendations.

Civilian staff and military personnel report positively on JPTs. They provide greater access to the field for civilian sections and a more in-depth understanding of issues in the areas visited. A particular asset of JPTs is that, due to the more regular presence of female international staff or CLIs, they are one of very few mechanisms that provide greater access to women in the community.

For JPTs to be really effective, however, their reports must be adequately followed-up. Complaints were heard from members of the protection cluster that recommendations and findings relevant to their work were often not shared. Moreover, it was not clear that there was any systematic follow-up from within the mission to ensure that recommendations were acted upon.

Recommendations

• Civilian staff need improved access to communities in field locations, either through JPTs or other initiatives.

• Findings need to be shared and systems set in place to ensure follow up and implementation of recommendations.

Policing – the key to longer term security for civilians

Often neglected in discussions of international peacekeeping, the police can be vital in providing increased protection for civilians. A particular asset is that police are normally trained to interact with civilians in a way that military are not. Moreover, in the longer term, police should be the primary resource for communities, and the development of national police capacity is crucial.

In Chad, MINURCAT has been supporting the DIS, a force dedicated to the provision of security in areas of refugee and IDP concentration and to humanitarian actors. While there are real and legitimate concerns about the DIS's performance, the community it serves has generally

been appreciative of its presence and has indicated that it has resulted in increased security.[38] This initiative has also had the benefit of increasing national capacity and reinforcing the presence of women in the DIS specifically and in the police force overall.[39] As the MINURCAT force draws down, the Government of Chad and UN are making efforts to maintain the DIS in Eastern Chad.[40]

In southern Sudan, UNMIS civilian police are involved in a variety of initiatives, though many have been slow to yield results. Working in collaboration with a number of other UN agencies and programmes, they have helped to establish Special Protection Units in police stations to provide services to women, children, and other vulnerable groups. They have also initiated Police–Community Relations Committees in roughly 25 communities, providing a forum for police and communities to discuss issues of concern.[41] An additional positive initiative has been the establishment of a communications system for police in southern Sudan, including both the donation of material and the training of police in its use.[42]

Recommendations

- Ensuring the presence of an accountable and effective police force needs to be a priority when developing any sustainable protection of civilians strategy.

- Civilian police have the capacity to help create an additional bridge between military and civilian culture, and should be deployed more routinely in conjunction with military contingents.

Seeking to address impunity – Joint Investigation and Verification Teams

In the DRC, Joint Investigation and Verification Teams consisting of MONUSCO Human Rights staff and members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) military authorities investigate and follow up on abuses reportedly perpetrated by the FARDC against civilians. Although extremely limited in scope and financial support, this collaborative effort has been praised by national and international actors as being an important initiative in helping to curb abuses. At the time of writing, however, Joint Verification Teams had been suspended for several months while the mechanism was evaluated. Lack of funding for per diems and other minor expenses for participants had also reduced the frequency of field missions. In the words of one FARDC soldier engaged in the process, 'It's a shame – people were starting to get scared'.[43]

Recommendations

- Support to effective accountability mechanisms need to form part of any protection of civilians strategy.

- Effective piloting of new initiatives requires adequate resourcing. Sufficient investment should be made from the inception of such efforts to ensure that they are given the best possible chance of success.

4 An ensemble performance

Working together for protection of civilians

Like an epic film, a peacekeeping mission requires a cast of thousands, and, similarly, they must perform as an ensemble in order to achieve the desired results. This means that roles must be assigned to the correct actors. They must then learn their parts, be given appropriate direction throughout the performance, and must act in concert with the rest of the 'cast'.

Unfortunately none of these elements are working quite as they should. The tools discussed above are effective in part because they address some of the areas of dissonance. JPTs, for example, bring civilians and military together and, by requiring them to make joint assessments and recommendations, ensure that each informs the other.

In the DRC, where there is often no civilian presence in bases in field locations, CLIs are necessary not merely because the military do not have language skills, but because typically the military is not trained to interact with communities. There is a crucial cultural gap that needs to be bridged, not merely between the host community and the peacekeepers on the basis of nationality, but between military and civilian cultures. As mentioned above, civilian police have the capacity to help create an additional bridge, but all too often they are underutilised as protection actors.

Unfortunately, this gap exists within the mission as well. Aside from the mission leadership, the main actors involved in protection of civilian activities are the military, the police, and the substantive civilian components.[44] Although they work on the same issues and in the same areas, it is often not clear that they are really working together. Indeed, sometimes they fail to even see themselves as part of a joint mission. This was illustrated, for example, by one soldier's comment that the CLIs were merely 'accommodated' by the base, and not really a part of it; or by one battalion's unwillingness to take public responsibility for the legacy of the massacres in Kiwanja because the failure to protect the community was attributed to their predecessors.

Missions are making efforts to address some of these issues. In southern Sudan, Joint and Regional Operations Centres bring together the heads of all of the key components of the mission in order to encourage the sharing of information. The Rapid Response and Early Warning Cell in MONUSCO serves a similar purpose. However, while a laudable start, these do not go far enough. Most crucially, they do not ensure that at field level the various components are working together as teams.

At one UNMIS team site in southern Sudan, for example, several staff members of civilian units were unable to identify, either by role or by name, the key military and police personnel. When asked who he would inform if alerted of an imminent security risk, one civilian staff member immediately replied, 'the Governor',[45] and seemed sceptical when it was proposed that he also inform the UNMIS military located in an office just a stone's throw away.

Such situations can arise as the result of a lack of understanding of how various components should work together. They may also arise when civilian staff at field level are too junior to ensure that their voices are heard by the military contingent. In southern Sudan, UNMIS is addressing this, in preparation for the referendum, by deploying senior civilian staff at state capital level in each state. In a crisis, when time is of the essence, such deployments could have the potential to save lives.

Engaging with communities

No matter how large the force, peacekeepers will never be able to protect all civilians, everywhere in their area of operations. Engagement with the community, however, can help improve the response, manage expectations, and build trust.

One neighbourhood was particularly dangerous. The youth came to ask for help, and we told them to go talk to MONUSCO. They did, and MONUSCO provided patrols in the neighbourhood.

Parish priest, North Kivu, August 2010.

Engagement with communities should be established at the earliest possible opportunity and continue throughout the life of the mission. Such engagement provides opportunities to collect information that helps peacekeepers to understand the environment and to target interventions. It provides opportunities for the mission to explain its priorities and constraints, and to help manage the often extremely high expectations that communities have of what the mission can accomplish. It is also vital to ensuring that peacekeeping missions do not undermine the efforts that local government or communities already use to increase their own safety. Communities' perception of their own safety is one of the best measures of how effective protection strategies are.[46]

In virtually every interview conducted during the course of the research for this paper, communities requested more information from and communication with the relevant mission. However, the quality of that communication and the follow-up afterwards is critical.

We invited [MONUSCO] to attend the celebration for International Human Rights Day, but they said 'on n'est pas là pour le bonheur des congolais'

(We are not here for the pleasure/enjoyment of the Congolese.)

Interview, North Kivu, August 2010.

Communities complained, for example, that they are repeatedly questioned about security threats without seeing any change. Humanitarian organisations complain that they are put in a difficult situation when peacekeeping personnel promise interventions that cannot be delivered. There are countless examples of peacekeeping personnel who have offended and alienated community representatives through thoughtless comments. While community meetings like the 'urafiki'[47] meetings initiated in the DRC, for example, were highly praised by some for improving the flow of communication, in other communities they have reportedly entrenched distrust between the community and the mission.

Engagement with communities is a vital tool for peacekeeping missions. However, missions need to ensure that such engagement is undertaken with clear objectives, that communities understand how information is used, and that peacekeeping personnel have the necessary skills to perform the task.

The struggle to bridge language barriers

An adequate number of language assistants with tested language skills must be hired to ensure that peacekeeping mission staff can communicate. In both North and South Kivu in the DRC, bilingual international staff said that, even in large meetings in the regional capital, sometimes the interpretation was so poor that the meaning was actually reversed.[48]

Moreover, language assistants must be trained in their jobs, and peacekeepers must be trained to work with them. Untrained language assistants have a tendency to paraphrase or even rephrase questions and answers in ways that can fundamentally change the nature of the information that is communicated. Taking the time to provide training can improve their understanding of the local context and avoid potentially dangerous miscommunication.

Sharing information with the community

Many of the mechanisms that have been identified or put in place by peacekeeping missions are aimed at extracting information from the community for the purposes of analysis or reporting. Relatively little attention has been paid, however, to the equally important effort to disseminate information in the community.

No one really knows what they are doing, and so no one knows what might be lost if they go.

Men's focus group, Kiwanja, August 2010.

Virtually every mission has a national radio station which provides information throughout the country, and these are highly appreciated. Focus groups in southern Sudan reported that although they knew little about the mission, the information that they did have came from the radio; in the DRC the most recent Secretary-General's report on MONUSCO states that, 'Radio Okapi continues to enjoy the largest audience and the highest credibility of any countrywide radio network in the [DRC]'.[49] However, not every community is able to receive the broadcasts and, as the report goes on to acknowledge, '[e]ffective communication with the Congolese population and authorities remains a major challenge'.[50]

Communication is not merely a public relations exercise: where peacekeepers are tasked with protecting civilians, the dissemination of information can be vital to the security of the civilians.[51] It is also a vital tool to help ensure that communities' expectations do not exceed the capacity of the mission, thereby undermining the mission's credibility. It is therefore crucial that peacekeeping missions develop strategies for improving their relations with local communities.

Civil-military liaisons and PIOs may be required to take on some of these tasks, but are too often untrained for such work. Others interpret the community relations role as being primarily about the management of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and public relations.

Recommendations

- Communication strategies must be developed at local levels to provide ongoing information to the community. This should include messaging about the role of the mission and its activities, key security information, and how to provide information and feedback to the mission, including complaints. Strategies should be adapted to take into consideration the different ways in which men and women access information.

- Investment in language assistants must be greatly increased. No troops should ever be sent even on routine patrol without qualified and trained language assistants, including female language assistants were possible, whose capacity to translate adequately has been tested. DPKO should provide guidance on working with language assistants for those who have never done so.

Who, what, when, where, and how? Information gathering and management

Information about context is the basic building block in any strategy to protect civilians from violence. The management and analysis of this information poses a serious challenge to peacekeeping missions.

The Protection Prioritisation Matrix, implemented in the DRC, is a good example of an outcome-oriented mechanism that successfully brings together information from a variety of sources. In this system, organisations jointly identify protection concerns at field level and specify what action they believe should be taken – the establishment of a mobile operating base or patrolling, for example – and then indicate the level of urgency. These are discussed in regular meetings between military and civilian components of the mission and the head of the protection cluster. While this can be only one factor in making strategic decisions about deployments, [52] it permits organisations working directly with communities to help bring their perspective forward.

Weaknesses have been identified in this system. A lack of consistency in field submissions can be problematic if information is not submitted or is not routinely updated. There can also be a tendency to rate everything as urgent. Critically, the recommendations are not always taken into account or acted upon. On the whole, however, the system provides a greater opportunity for concerns to be raised at the field level. Moreover, it can help to overcome the tension and distrust that often exist between civilian, humanitarian, and military actors, allowing for an active and ongoing dialogue between a wide range of protection actors and the peacekeeping mission.

A lack of clarity about what is or is not confidential can also create a barrier to the sharing of information about protection issues, both

within and outside of the mission. This was mentioned in particular in relation to JPT reports whose recommendations or findings are inconsistently shared, according to members of the Protection Cluster.

Additionally, parallel and/or poorly co-ordinated reporting lines can result in the duplication of labour, as illustrated by the fact that CLIs and military Commanders frequently send separate reports to their hierarchies with essentially the same content. Finally, the loss of information due to high turnover of staff and territoriality between sections were also cited as problems by a variety of actors.

As a consequence, each section of the mission cultivates its own sources, as do actors outside the mission, but the information is rarely brought together. Even when such information is collated, according to people interviewed, there is a lack of analysis. In some missions, the Joint Mission Analysis Cell (JMAC) is tasked with providing this kind of analysis; in one interview, however, the JMAC was described as a 'black hole' where 'information goes in and never comes back out'.

Recommendations

• Ensure that information collection is done in a way that is coherent, purposeful and responsible. Missions should conduct an overall mapping of information sources and ensure that there are clear channels for information-sharing with built-in feedback mechanisms.

• Mission staff should be encouraged to make information available to protection partners unless there are compelling security reasons why it should not be.

• A review of the Protection Prioritisation Matrix should be done to identify strengths and overcome weaknesses so that the system can be used more effectively in a variety of missions.

Understanding the particular needs of women

Women are affected differently in conflict, as is recognised by UN Security Council Resolution 1325, subsequent resolutions, and international commitments. Some specific recommendations from the UNSC and other bodies have been to expand the role and contribution of women at all levels in peacekeeping operations, to ensure that peacekeeping operations have a gender perspective, and to ensure that all peacekeeping personnel are trained on the particular needs of women. This is vital, because even where overall incidents of violence are in decline, for women the situation often does not improve, or even worsens.[53]

In none of the communities in either southern Sudan or the DRC where focus groups were conducted with women did any of them recall having met separately with the peacekeeping mission to discuss safety concerns. There are a number of possible explanations for this,[54] but none of them adequately addresses the problem: if the mission does not engage directly with women, it cannot understand the specific threats that women and girls face, and the likelihood of women sharing information or seeking help from the mission is greatly reduced.

The extent to which peacekeeping missions have been adapted to address the needs of women varies greatly, but very few are meeting the challenge effectively. This is perhaps most striking in the DRC where, in 2009 alone, some 15,297 cases of sexual violence were recorded.[55] The prevalence of sexual violence in the DRC is one of the best-known facts about the country internationally, yet there is a dearth of female language assistants and CLIs, and no consistent presence of women in other roles.[56]

One of the crucial problems in the field is that the missions either do not or cannot speak directly with women. This is partly because peacekeeping personnel often speak only to village leaders, and in general women are not represented in village committees, are not village chiefs or representatives of local government, and are not brought forward as community leaders in discussions.[57] Interviews showed again and again that when information travels from the top down, it habitually travels from man to man; women are very often left out of the loop entirely.[58] Moreover, the shortage of language assistants, especially female ones, is a particular barrier to communicating with women, who often have a lower level of education than men and are less likely to speak languages other than their mother tongue.

Although specific guidance has been given by the UNSC to increase the representation of women in peacekeeping operations, and to ensure that all personnel have adequate training, this is rarely the case. Moreover, while an increase in female representation will make the mission more approachable by women, the mere fact of being a woman does not make an individual a gender expert, nor does it ensure understanding of the particular cultural context in which women are working.

Recommendations

- Missions must ensure that they increase not only the number of women in the field, but also the overall level of gender training.

- Missions must ensure they engage with women and that they do so separately from men.

- An adequate number of female language assistants and CLIs must be hired to ensure that the mission can engage with women actively and be responsive to women approaching the mission for help.

The importance of training and guidance

Protection of civilians is increasingly the priority mandate task for peacekeeping missions,[59] but many peacekeeping personnel arrive with no understanding of what this is or how it is to be delivered. Many – if not most – will never actually read the mandate or the strategies and documents that outline the mission's responsibilities. To address this issue, missions are increasingly providing specific guidance on how to protect civilians and DPKO is working to develop a strategic framework on protection of civilians, with guidelines for missions preparing mission-wide protection of civilian strategies.

In southern Sudan, UNMIS's Security Concept for the Protection of Civilians provides a general overview of the mission's obligations, as well as direct and specific guidance to its military, police, and civilian components. Perhaps even more compelling is the explicit direction provided in a series of SOPs and FRAGOs[60] on everything from maintaining a standing capacity for joint patrols to providing a safe haven to fleeing civilians.[61]

In the DRC, the publication in 2009 of the booklet *Protection in Practice: Practical protection handbook for peacekeepers* is a positive initiative. The handbook provides clear and precise 'dos' and 'don'ts' for police and military personnel at different levels in the hierarchy on how to respond to specific situations. It has the advantage of being a joint initiative and is therefore informed by the contributions of a broader community. Its disadvantage, however, is that its readers are under no obligation to treat its contents as anything more forceful than recommendations.[62]

While such guidance is helpful in clarifying the expectations of the mission, however, it cannot be a substitute for pre-deployment and in-mission training. A basic overview of the mission responsibilities relating to protection of civilians, child protection, gender, and other topics is provided at induction, but there is a glut of information during this brief period on arrival, and much of this is forgotten before it has even been completed.

Recommendations

- Investment in protection of civilians and gender training prior to deployment is vital to ensuring that personnel understand and are committed to their role. Practical, scenario-based training should be offered, at a minimum, to all commanders, heads of units, and civil-military liaisons.

- Each mission should provide all personnel – civilian, police, and military – with explicit directives so that it is clear what is expected of them.

- Training needs to include direction on why and how to engage with relevant stakeholders – government, humanitarians, and, crucially, the community they are there to protect.

- Training should be ongoing, with refreshers and overviews offered not only at induction, but for the duration of peacekeepers' deployments in-country.

Measuring success

Measuring the impact of protection initiatives can be exceptionally difficult, largely because effective protection is ideally preventive, and prevention is nearly impossible to prove. Moreover, changes in context and personnel can make it difficult to have clear analysis over time. However, efforts can and should be made to ensure that protection measures achieve their objectives.

Early assessment of the protection situation in villages, areas, or even regions can help to assess changes. UNMIS reportedly conducted village assessments at one stage, but these have not been kept up-to-date or put to much use since. Moreover, there were criticisms that much of the information collected was about humanitarian needs rather than protection issues.

Recommendations

- Information relevant to the protection of civilians should be collected from the earliest stages of the mission and updated regularly, in consultation with communities. Protection activities should be developed and delivered to respond to identified needs.

- Measurable indicators should be developed for protection activities wherever possible and reporting should refer to these.

- Existing monitoring mechanisms should be evaluated for efficacy and implemented more effectively.

5   Conclusions and recommendations

From increasingly specific resolutions from the UNSC to the individual initiatives of mission personnel in the field, efforts are being made at all levels to develop peacekeeping missions' capacity to improve protection of civilians. Nonetheless, there are still crushing failures, as in the DRC in August 2010. Each one of these failures represents hundreds of lives irredeemably marked by tragedy.

Peacekeeping missions are hindered in their work by a lack of political will, resource constraints, and high turnover of staff with varying levels of training and experience, to name but a few. That improvements can be made within these constraints, however, is evidenced by the fact that the tools, practices, and innovations examined in the course of this research were all implemented at the field level without a significant increase in resources.

In order for these good initiatives to have maximum impact, however, they must be assessed, systematized, and adequately resourced. This assessment must look not only at the number of activities, but also the positive outcome for the people they are meant to help. This cannot be done without ongoing, systematic engagement with communities.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the UN Security Council and UN member states

- The UNSC should be prepared to provide robust political support in a timely manner to the mission leadership when a Host State is making it difficult for the mission to fulfil its mandate to protect civilians.

- The measure of mission success in providing effective protection should be based not on their activities, but on outcomes. The UNSC should expect that reports on peacekeeping operations focus not on what tools are being used, but what they have achieved in terms of an improved protection situation for communities, using measurable indicators and based on what communities themselves report.

- Adequate resources must be allocated to support measures for protection of civilians. This includes the deployment of personnel of adequate seniority, as well as the resources needed to adopt some of the above-mentioned practices and to implement the mission's civilian protection mandate at the field level.

Recommendations to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

- Civilian representation at field level is vital to improve protection. Adequate resources must be allocated to the recruitment, training, and deployment of civilians in the field.

- Greater efforts must be made to recruit, train, and deploy women to the field.

- Community engagement should begin from the earliest phases of preparation for deployment and must continue through the life of the mission.

- DPKO needs to undertake an evaluation of existing tools and initiatives with the aim of institutionalizing best practices. Specific guidance and training should be provided to mission staff to ensure that the purpose and objectives of these tools and mechanisms are understood, so they can be appropriately adapted to local contexts.

Recommendations to peacekeeping missions

- Peacekeepers need to ensure that they consult with communities, including separate consultations with women, to understand and better respond to protection threats, to ensure appropriate expectations, and to build trust with communities.

- Peacekeepers should be deployed in remote and isolated areas and should undertake flexible patrolling, taking into account information received from communities and humanitarian actors regarding where and when people are at greatest risk from violence.

- Tools and initiatives developed and/or implemented at field level should have clear objectives and include mechanisms for measuring impact, including through consultation with the community.

- Systems must be implemented at all levels to ensure that there is adequate communication between the civilian and the military components of a peacekeeping mission. At field level, efforts should be made to ensure that at least some civilians are of sufficient seniority that their input and recommendations will be heeded.

- Public communications strategies should be developed at local levels to ensure that communities are aware of the role, activities, and limitations of the mission.

- Effective strategies must be put in place for addressing violations by national security forces, whether military or police.

Protection of civilians is by its very nature a challenge; one that must involve all components of the mission, as well as support from the highest levels. It requires understanding the context and the risks for the population, as well as engaging effectively with the communities that the mission is trying to protect. Following the recent incidents in the DRC, SRSG Wallstrom said "we can and must improve".[63] This improvement must come quickly if it is to keep pace with growing scepticism on the part of communities and governments. However, the recent increase in field-based initiatives and new ways of working outlined in this paper show that change is possible, and that it can happen rapidly, when the will is present.

Notes

[1] DPKO/DFS Non-Paper (2009), 'A new Partnership Agenda: Charting a new Horizon for UN Peacekeeping', New York: United Nations, p.III.

[2] DPKO/OCHA (2009), 'Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations', New York: United Nations. (Hereinafter "OCHA/DPKO Report")

[3] See, *inter alia*, UNSC Resolution 1888 (2009), para 19.

[3] See, for example, UNSC Resolution 1856, para. 6 and UNSC Resolution 1925 para 11: 'Emphasizes that the protection of civilians … must be given priority in decisions about the use of available capacity and resources...' S/RES/1856 (2008) and S/RES/1925 (2010).

[4] See, for example, Security Council Resolution 1894, para. 26. S/RES/1894 (2009), 11 November 2009. Also SC/RES/1925 (2010), para. 12(f).

[5] Oxfam interviews with MONUSCO and INGOs, 17–18 July 2010, Kitchanga, North Kivu, DRC.

[6] The DPKO/DFS Operational Concept on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2009, para. 25) advises that, 'an important element in determining whether the mission is meeting the objectives articulated in its protection strategy includes seeking regular feedback from the local communities it serves.'

[7] Security Council Press Statement on the Democratic Republic of Congo, SC/10016 AFR/2030, 26 August 2010. Accessed 4 September 2010 at: http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc10016.doc.htm. See also Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, para 8. S/2010/512. 8 October 2010.

[8] Some existing examples include the 1995 'Guidelines for UN Peacekeeping Operations'; the 2000 'Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations' (the Brahimi Report), which went further in redefining UN peacekeeping but the main recommendations of which have yet to be accepted or implemented by member states represented on the General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping ('the C34'); the 2003 Handbook on Multi-Dimensional Peacekeeping Operations; and most recently DPKO's Capstone Doctrine, which emphasises the limitations of peacekeeping as a crisis management tool.

[9] To complement this work, the United Nations and think-tanks have published additional documents to inform and complement the reform process. Three key documents are: 'A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping' (2009), an internal document (or 'non-paper') prepared by DPKO and the DFS that reflects the perspectives of the two departments (www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/newhorizon.shtml, accessed 8 November 2010); 'Building on Brahimi: a Coalition for Peacekeeping in an Era of Strategic Uncertainty' (2009) by the Center on International Cooperation (www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org/PBPS/Pages/Public/viewdocument.aspx?id=2&docid=944, accessed 8 November 2010); and DPKO/OCHA, 'Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges' (2009), an independent study jointly commissioned by the DPKO and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org/pbps/Pages/Public/viewdocument.aspx?id=2&docid=1014, accessed 8 November 2010).

[10] Interviews were conducted in the major centres of Juba and Rumbek in southern Sudan and Goma and Bukavu in the DRC. Interviews and focus groups were also conducted in field locations, with a particular focus on communities where Oxfam is working directly or has a local partner. In southern Sudan this included two communities in Lakes State, Wulu and Cuiebet, and Witto in Central Equatoria State. In the DRC, field research was conducted in Kitchanga and Kiwanja in North Kivu.

[11] OCHA/DPKO Report, *op.cit.* p. 45

[12] Maya Mailer and Lydia Poole (2010), 'Rescuing the Peace in southern Sudan', Joint NGO Briefing Paper with other agencies, Oxford: Oxfam International. www.oxfam.org/en/policy/rescuing-peace-southern-sudan (accessed 8 November 2010).

[13] Chapter VII is the section of the Charter that addresses threats to international peace and security. Acting under this Chapter, the UNSC authorises the peacekeeping mission to 'take the necessary action' or to use 'all necessary means' to accomplish the mandated tasks. For a more complete discussion, see 'Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges', an independent study jointly commissioned by DPKO and OCHA, (hereinafter "OCHA/DPKO Report"), Chapter 2.

[14] DPKO/DFS Operational Concept on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

[15] Mass Atrocities Response Operations: Annotated Planning Framework, Version 2.0, 1 August 2008, p.4. Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and the U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute. http://www.coa-nonprofit.org/MARO_APF_080608.pdf (accessed September 2010).

[16] OCHA/DPKO Report, *op.cit.* pp. 163–64. See also pp. 355–56.

[17] Armed confrontations have been taking place in Khorfulus since April between the SPLA and the forces of General Athor, described as a rebel by the GOSS. Numerous violations have been reported from the area since, primarily attributed to the SPLA. UNMIS investigators have been turned back by government forces, on one occasion even with violence against the helicopter pilots. (Oxfam interviews, Juba, July 2010. See also Sudan Tribune, Residents of Jonglei State's Khorfulus Call for Dialogue with Athor. 6 July 2010. Accessed through UNMIS media monitoring report September 25, 2010 at http://unmis.unmissions.org/Portals/UNMIS/MMR/MMR%207%20July%2010.pdf)

[18] OCHA/DPKO Report, *op.cit.* In southern Sudan as well, "coordination with GOS/GOSS and or SAF/SPLA is required by precedent *but not by the terms of the UNMIS [Status of Forces Agreement]*". (See UNMIS, Standard Operating Procedure: Priority Emergency Response, p. 6.) In principle, this means that permission is not required, but in practice it is almost invariably requested. This is problematic, because there are considerably greater political consequences if the mission acts against an explicit 'no' then if it never asks permission at all. In Darfur there seems to be even greater confusion about the SOFA, with one member of the UN describing it as "not a legal document". (Oxfam interview, telephone, July 2010.)

19 In Darfur this has recently taken the form of a stand-off over six Darfuris accused by the government of instigating violence in Kalma Camp, in South Darfur State. This is a considerably firmer stand than – and is perhaps a reaction to – a forcible disarmament conducted by Sudanese Armed Forces in 2008, in which the mission stood by and watched while an estimated 64 civilians were killed and 117 wounded, many of them women and children. In the DRC, alarmed by the risk of actually being complicit in violations, MONUSCO conditioned its support to the FARDC (DRC Armed Forces) on good behaviour. Critics argue that these measures are not effective. Others argue that it may not be adequate under international law to suspend support only to specific brigades, but that it must extend to the FARDC in general. (See, among others, Reuters. More Gunfire at Kalma Camp, aid workers barred – UN. 11 August 2010. (Accessed September 2010 at http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N11252095.htm); UNAMID Condemns Use of Excessive Force at Kalma IDP Camp in South Darfur, 26 August 2008; International Crisis Group, Thierry Vircoulon. After MONUC, Should MONUSCO Continue to Support Congolese Military Campaigns? 19 July 2010.

[20] Author interviews from southern Sudan, the DRC, Chad, and Darfur. For more discussion on this issue, see generally OCHA/DPKO Report, Chapter 3. When information emerged following the recent mass rapes in the DRC, for example, it was reported that a MONUSCO patrol travelled through villages where the rapes had taken place, but was not informed. As one commentator pointed out, 'the lack of disclosure to MONUSCO is a powerful illustration of the relationship that the UN force has with people on the ground'. See Press Conference by Special Representative for Democratic Republic of Congo, 25 August 2010. Accessed 6 September 2010 at: http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2010/100825_Meece.doc.htm. Also MediaGlobal, 'Neither rape nor bad communication is cultural: a critical look at MONUSCO's press conference', 3 September 2010. Accessed 7 September 2010 at: http://mediaglobal.org/article/2010-09-03/neither_rape_nor_bad_communication_is_cultural_a_critical_look_at_monusco_s_press_conference

[21] Oxfam interviews with MONUSCO and INGOs, 17–18 July 2010, Kitchanga, North Kivu, DRC.

[22] These processes and others like them have been documented elsewhere. See UN Analytical Inventory pp.22-24; Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz (2007) 'Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict: Global Overview and Implications for the Security Sector', DCAF, p.170.

[23] In protection surveys conducted in the DRC, communities have repeatedly told Oxfam that joint patrols increase their sense of security. In southern Sudan, interviewees reported that national forces 'behaved better' when accompanied by peacekeepers, and co-location of police in the field was welcomed as a positive innovation. (Author interviews, July 2010.)

[24] In many interviews, communities pointed out that national forces were better adapted to the environment than peacekeepers. National police have the power of arrest, for example, while peacekeepers do not. In southern Sudan, both communities and authorities commented that the SPLA was much better adapted to confronting the LRA threat because they are experienced "bush fighters", better adapted to dealing with this specific type of threat. (Oxfam interviews DRC, Sudan, July and August 2010.)

[25] From the 'Terms of Reference for JPT Liaison Interpreters'. UNMIS, April 2009.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] Of 21 CLIs deployed in North Kivu, for example, only two are women, and they are both based in Goma. It was explained that this is was because the military are were not comfortable having women located in their bases for fear of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

[28] Oxfam interview, 21 August 2010.

[29] Sometimes the information the CLI provides to the contingent is ignored, either because the position or the person (being a Congolese national) is resented or not valued, or because the CLI is perceived as a spy in the midst of the military. In addition, because of their separate reporting lines, some military contingents view CLIs as being 'external', and say that they are merely being accommodated in the base. This is also illustrative of the gap between military and civilian components of the peacekeeping mission.

[30] In November 2008 roughly 150 men and boys were massacred over the course of two days. Although the MONUC base was less than half-a-mile away, the UN peacekeepers did not intervene. For more information, see, *inter alia*, Human Rights Watch *Killings in Kiwaja: The UN's Inability to Protect Civilians*. December 12, 2008.

[31] Participants in focus groups in Kiwanja stated that they were still not satisfied with the UN response and wanted a more formal apology.

[32] The DIS is a force composed of Chadian police and gendarmerie and dedicated to the provision of security in areas of refugee and IDP concentration and to humanitarian actors.

[33] Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad. 30 July 2010. S/2010/409. Para 13.

[34] Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, S/2010/529, 14 October 2010, Paragraph 7

[35] Reportedly within 20 minutes.

[36] 'Flashing' or 'beeping' is when the caller hangs up before the call is answered, but once the receiving telephone has registered the incoming number. In doing so, no credit is used, but the person called – in this case the surveillance centre – has the telephone number of the person who wants to reach them.

[37] This last concern is reportedly being addressed in the DRC and Chad through negotiation with telecommunications companies to extend networks to otherwise inaccessible locations.

[38] Jesus A. Nunez Villaverde (February 2010) 'MINURCAT: Achievements, Disappointments and a Fragile Future', Institute of Studies on Conflict and Humanitarian Action, Madrid, pp.11-13.

[39] The most recent Secretary-General's Report stated that of 807 DIS personnel on 15 July 2010, 90 ninety were women. An additional 250 women had been recruited to join the national police, with MINURCAT support in the form of 'uniforms, boots, caps and belts', increasing the percentage of women in the force from 4 per cent to 9 per cent. It remains to be seen, however, what role these women will play in the force. As interviewees pointed out in southern Sudan and the DRC, all too often female police officers in national forces remain in large centres and/or are relegated to tasks such as traffic control, where their capacity to make a difference is limited.

[40] Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, S/2010/529, 14 October 2010, Paragraph 7.

[41] Author interviews, Juba, July 2010. The report received from UNPOL indicated that the committees included civil society representation and actively encouraged the participation of women; however, others stated that the committees consisted only of police and local authorities.

[42] This has been a joint initiative of German development agency GTZ and UNMIS

[43] Oxfam interview, Bukavu, 26 August 2010. It is important to note that in many cases the national capacity or will to try and detain criminals does not exist, and they are simply released. In these cases not only is justice definitively seen not to be done, but there is an additional risk that witnesses will be targeted for retribution. One local human rights activist pointed out that the involvement of the FARDC in investigations increases the likelihood of retribution, while the presence of MONUSCO provides a false sense of security to victims and witnesses. He advocated the need for greater protection for victims and witnesses.

[44] The term 'substantive civilian components' generally denotes civilian units within the peacekeeping mission engaged in work directly related to the mandate of the mission (as opposed, for example, to those working in support functions such as finance, administration, etc.). These may include Civil Affairs, Child Protection, Human Rights, Rule of Law, Protection of Civilians (where it exists), and Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Resettlement and Reintegration (DDRRR) (list is non-exhaustive).

[45] The Governor was the senior civilian authority in the local government with responsibility for security.

[46] The DPKO/DFS Operational Concept *op. cit.,* advises that, "an important element in determining whether the mission is meeting the objectives articulated in its protection strategy includes seeking regular feedback from the local communities it serves." Para. 25.

[47] ''Urafiki' means 'friendship' in Kiswahili.

[48] The concern was not merely about the military contingents' lack of French, but also that many of them did not appear to have a good command of English, rendering communication even with other mission or protection personnel extremely difficult.

[49] S/2010/164, 30 March 2010. Thirty-First Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, para 39.

[50] In its 'featured news' of 12 August 2010, MONUSCO announced the establishment of a network for dialogue with civil society organisations. This is was the culmination of a public awareness drive about the change in the mission's mandate, launched in May 2010. The campaign targeted an estimated 5,000 people throughout Kinshasa. While this was a good initiative, no similar attempt seems to have been undertaken in the east, where the mission is most active. Indeed, during the field research for this paper, focus groups and community leaders alike were aware that MONUC had changed its name, but not of what had prompted the change or what the new name meant. MONUSCO website, 'MONUSCO sets up network for dialogue with civil society organizations in Kinshasa', 12 August 2010. Accessed 4 September 2010 at: http://monuc.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1042&ctl=Details&mid=1096&ItemID=10029

[51] Information about where patrols are taking place or which areas are being secured can prevent people from putting themselves unnecessarily at risk. When information about firewood patrols in Darfur was poorly disseminated, for example, many women continued to go out alone.

[52] While the field-level meeting is open to a variety of actors, it is a voluntary activity and does not include representation from all areas. There is no way to ensure that those contributing information have really consulted with the community, or that they have made efforts to include marginalised groups. In addition, depending on the dynamics between participants, some voices may be stronger than others in advocating for 'their' issue or area of concern. Moreover, there is always a risk that national actors may be intimidated by the process or by the international participants. Finally, areas that are isolated geographically or difficult to access due to insecurity may not be taken into consideration at all.

[53] A protection survey conducted in 2010 by Oxfam and its partners in North and South Kivu, for example, found that while one man in three perceived some improvement in his security in the preceding year, three-quarters of the women surveyed reported feeling less safe than before. Oxfam, (2010) 'Women and Children First', p.2.

[54] It is possible that discussions included other groups of women than the ones consulted in this research, or that women were not clear who they were meeting with. It is also possible that information is being shared with the peacekeeping mission by other protection actors (local organisations or NGOs, for example).

[55] Secretary-General's Report on United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. S/2010/164, para 73.

[56] Interviews with a police battalion specially tasked with protection of women and children in the DRC, for example, indicated that the representation of women in the UN Civilian Police support was highly inconsistent and that, while the women who had been deployed in the past were well-meaning and committed, they did not necessarily have any specific training.

[57] In the DRC, for example, the author has met with female village chiefs. It must be noted, however, that this is not common, and during the course of this field research, when requesting to meet with the representatives of an organisation providing support and treatment to survivors of sexual violence, the two individuals who attended the meeting were men.

[58] In focus groups in southern Sudan, for example, while the men seemed clear on UNMIS's mandate ('They are here to monitor the peace'), the women were not, stating that they were not clear on what they were there for, had never met with them, and that their only experience of the mission was that they its personnel drove through the area without stopping. Focus groups, Wulu and Cuiebet counties.

[59] See, inter alia, UNSC Resolution 1888 (2009), para 19.

[59] See, for example, UNSC Resolution 1856, para. 6 and UNSC Resolution 1925 para 11: 'Emphasizes that the protection of civilians … must be given priority in decisions about the use of available capacity and resources...' S/RES/1856 (2008) and S/RES/1925 (2010).

[60] A 'FRAGO' is the an abbreviation of for 'fragment of an order' and is defined as 'an amendment to part of a set of orders'. http://www.militarydictionary.com/definition/FRAGO.html, accessed 27 September 2010.

[61] While the UNMIS FRAGO offers guidance to military, however, it is notably poor in providing guidance on informing civilians of what may be offered to them. The only guidance that is offered is to the PIO, to 'Develop key messages in support of UNMIS operations when managing a mass influx of fleeing civilians' and 'Prepare draft statements of UNMIS success in managing a mass influx of fleeing civilians and expectation management statements', (emphasis added) without any guidance on who these messages are for, or when or how they will be delivered. See e.g. UNMIS/FHQ/JOC/FRAGO 081800C Apr 10, FRAGO 002/10 to OPO 001/10 Operation Steel Icon.

[62] Efforts are also being made to provide guidance from at the international level, notably the publication in June 2010 of 'An Analytical Inventory of Peacekeeping Practice' by the UN. While a laudable and useful piece of institutional memory, however, this document is more a reference guide for mission leadership.

[63] Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Security Council Meeting on the Democratic Republic of the Congo 7 September 2010, para 11.

For further information on the issues raised in this paper please e-mail advocacy@oxfaminternational.org.

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