

Civil Affairs 2020 Newsletter

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UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

In 2020, COVID-19 significantly affected the operational environments of peacekeeping operations. However, even under the constraints of the pandemic, **Civil Affairs** has maintained its comparative advantage at the local level, contributing to the development of political solutions to address local conflicts and sustain peace and social cohesion in local communities. In support of these efforts, the Civil Affairs team at Headquarters has also focused on strengthening guidance tools that can enhance the effectiveness of field operations, based on lessons learned and good practices. This newsletter showcases activities in the field that highlight the versatility and substantive contribution of Civil Affairs to effective peacekeeping during 2020.

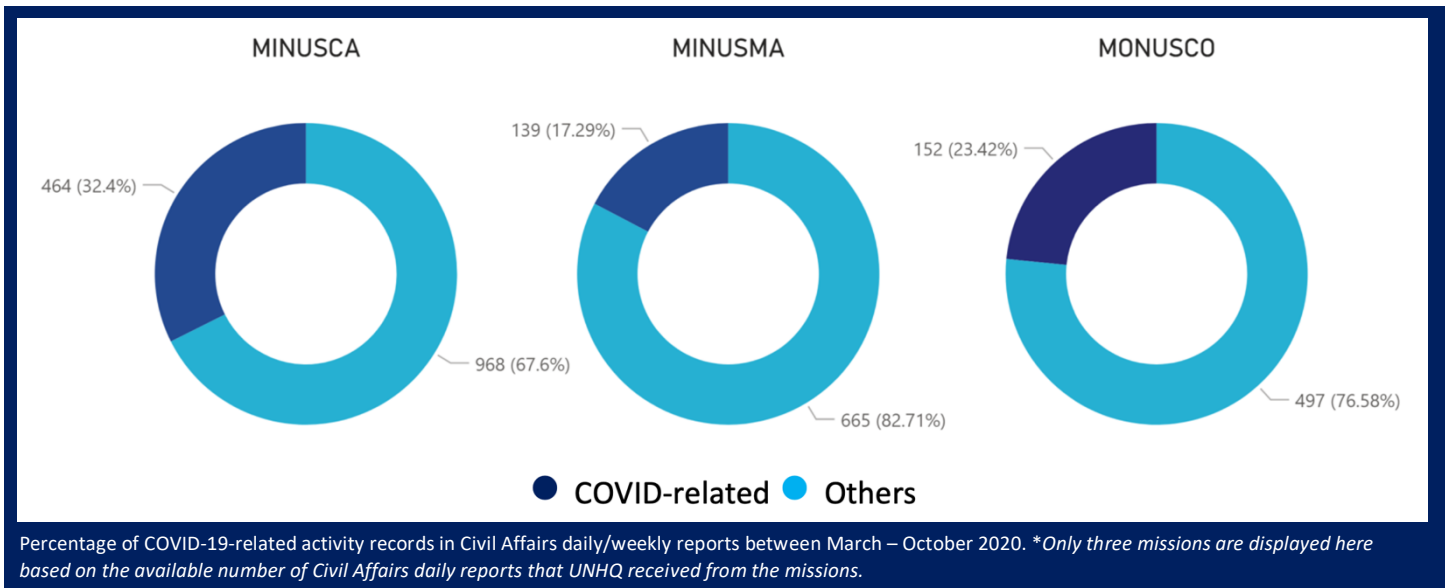
Ongoing Support to the Protection of Civilians Mandate in the Field

In many missions, support to the implementation of Protection of Civilians (PoC) mandate has been a key goal of Civil Affairs. In the Central African Republic, **MINUSCA** Civil Affairs continued to strengthen the Mission's early warning, prevention and response actions at field level. In 2020, 78 Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) in 38 Temporary Operating Bases supported 41 Community Alert Networks (CANs) and worked with 3,381 volunteers (955 women and 2,426 men). They actively supported the implementation of awareness-raising activities to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Community focal point volunteers received training on information collection and sharing of early warning alerts including on COVID-19 with the Force, CLAs and local authorities.

MINUSCA field offices also conducted second and third follow-up assessment exercises on the CLA/Force collaboration which showed overall improvement. In Ndele, following the establishment of office space for CLAs inside the Temporary Operation Bases, there was an increase in joint patrols due to enhanced joint planning. Likewise, in Obo, MINUSCA Civil Affairs observed better planning and coordination and an increase in joint patrols thanks to the commander's deeper understanding of the CLA/Force relationship. Moreover, the addition of English speaking CLAs in Bocaranga base helped to significantly improve communication and collaboration between the CLAs and the Force.



MONUSCO: Community Liaison Assistant working in the field.
Read her story from here: <https://bit.ly/2LME6T1>.



Responses to COVID-19 and the Beirut blast

As governments and communities struggle under the COVID-19 threat across the globe, Civil Affairs have stepped up in support of host health authorities and communities. In **MONUSCO**, in addition to the initial focus on sensitization efforts on COVID-19, Civil Affairs complemented these efforts with supporting local partners to identify community-specific risks and mitigation measures to limit the spread of the pandemic, increasing impact and local ownership. As part of this approach, Local Protection Committees (LPCs) integrated COVID-19 as a risk driver in their local protection plans and advocated with authorities to improve local responses, further identifying specific locations for awareness-raising (such as markets, door-to-door and via radio). With CLA facilitation, Community Protection Plans (CPPs) were updated to include COVID-19 mitigation measures and adapted to the specific context of communities in Kasaï, Kasaï Central and the South Kivu provinces. The Mission also encouraged LPC and CAN focal

points to transmit security and protection alerts related to COVID-19, such as uncontrolled movement across national and provincial borders, abuses by security forces, and planned protests or large gatherings.

In **UNMISS**, Civil Affairs led a COVID-19 prevention initiative with internally displaced persons (IDPs) producing over 60,000 face masks for communities in Malakal, Upper Nile State, resulting in Civil Affairs staff being nominated for the Secretary General's Award in the category of "Innovation" during COVID-19. **MINUSCA** Civil Affairs reoriented Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) (\$885,000) and the remaining 2019-20 programmatic funds to the implementation of anti-COVID-19 projects, including training of over 600 protection volunteers and 1,690 social mobilizers nationwide. The **UNAMID** Governance and Community Stabilization Section also implemented COVID-19 awareness raising sessions across the Darfur region, using their programmatic funds. In **UNIFIL**, Civil Affairs provided support to the recovery efforts in Beirut after the dramatic explosion at the Port of Beirut on 4 August 2020.



UNAMID: COVID-19 sensitization session with the health authorities

Supporting Local Peace Initiatives and Reconciliation

One of Civil Affairs' key contributions is to provide support to local peace initiatives and facilitate community dialogue and confidence-building. To deal with the risks and challenges of COVID-19, some missions also took advantage of using online tools to connect communities. For example, **UNMISS** ensured continuation of dialogue meetings among the Dinka, Nuer and Murle communities after COVID-19 by facilitating a virtual meeting among the representatives of the groups, which allowed them to discuss solutions for peace and reconciliation and continue their dialogues despite COVID-19.

In **UNMIK**, efforts continued in Kosovo to support a multi-ethnic society where all communities are able to co-exist peacefully. While there are laws, strategies and mechanisms designed to promote social cohesion across different ethnic groups, the reality at the community level is still challenging. In February 2020, to discuss prevailing intercommunal problems and elicit adequate responses to address them, Civil Affairs organized a number of coordination meetings engaging Deputy Mayors and Heads of Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns, as well as the Communities Committees from 21 municipalities. Civil Affairs facilitated the meetings for local authorities and communities to exchange their views and experiences on strengthening inter-institutional and inter-municipal cooperation to foster community reconciliation, (re)integration and cohesion.

UNAMID Governance and Community Stabilization Section (GCSS) continued to provide support in mitigating transhumance-related conflicts. In November 2020, GCSS conducted two separate dialogue forums in Khartoum, Khartoum Jadid and Korgul return villages to prevent tension between farmers and herders during the harvest season. About 95 participants attended the forums which provided the opportunity and space to discuss the root causes of the local conflict and raise awareness on peaceful coexistence and peaceful resolution of intercommunal violence in the region.

In South Sudan, to support the allocation of a minimum of 35% women representation in the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, **UNMISS** Civil Affairs facilitated a day-long Women to Women Forum on 14 October in Yambio. The forum brought together 35 women leaders from various political affiliations in Western Equatoria State, including rebel groups, to discuss and develop a unified strategy, and acquire lobbying skills to advocate for the 35% quota allotted to women in leadership positions. Participants committed to set aside political differences and collaborate as peace ambassadors. The



UNAMID: Dialogue forum to prevent tension between farmers and herders in North Darfur (November 2020)

forum concluded with a recommendation to expand the women grassroots network through monthly forums. The Western Equatoria Governor addressed the participants by highlighting the need for the state government to work collaboratively with women, to support women empowerment, as well as encouraging women to further develop through self-help.

Other missions also actively supported local peace initiatives in different contexts. **MONUSCO** Civil Affairs facilitated inter-communal consultations and dialogues from April 2019 to September 2020 in Kasai, resulting in the signing of agreements for peaceful cohabitation by representatives of 112 communities in the province. In Mali, following the split observed within the Groupe d'Auto-défense Touareg Imghads et Alliés (GATIA), **MINUSMA** Civil Affairs organized community meetings in Tessalit cercle in the Kidal region to initiate a process of rapprochement between the conflict parties and to enable youth to work together. In Cyprus, **UNFICYP** Civil Affairs established the Youth Champions for Environment and Peace, a network of young activists supported by Civil Affairs to collaborate on environmental campaigns across the divide and build peace from the bottom up. Outputs included new relationships between young people, raised awareness of shared environmental challenges, and a video to mark 75 years of the UN.

Restoration and Extension of State Authorities

Improving state authorities' capacities to address community needs and peacefully regulate tensions is key to sustaining peace in conflict-affected communities, especially under the trying time of COVID-19 pandemic.

In Mali, based on the observation that administrative officials in the Ménaka region were recruited without any appropriate qualifications, **MINUSMA** Civil Affairs facilitated



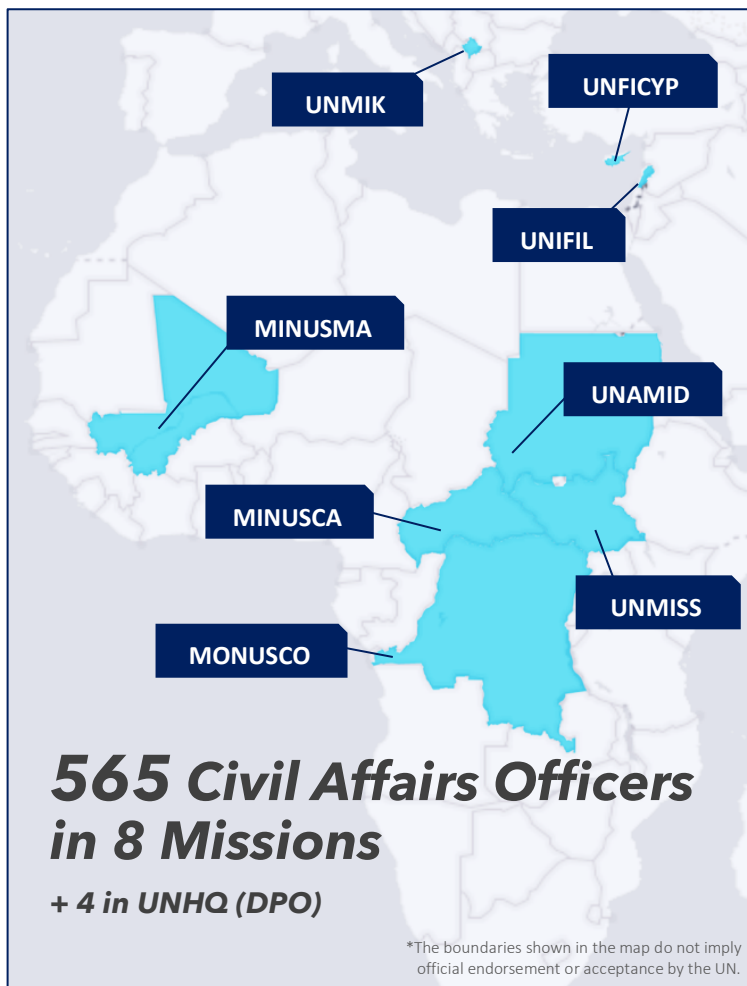
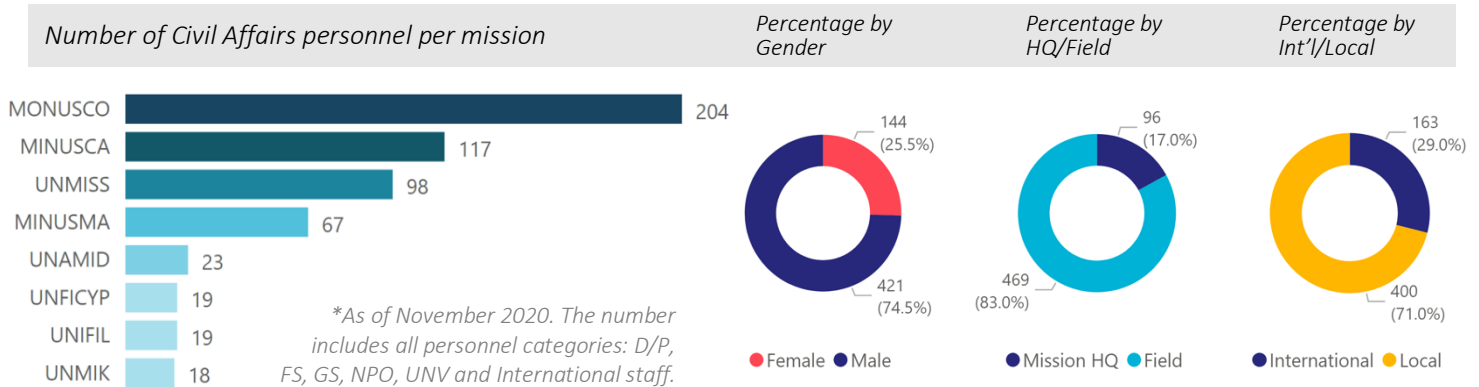
MINUSCA: Training workshop for the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (March 2020)

a series of capacity building sessions targeting State representatives (Prefets, Prefets Adjoints and Sous Prefets), local elected officials and members of the Interim Authority of Ménaka region, in close coordination with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization. The training covered principles of participatory governance and citizenship, as well as the management of local government entities. Trained staff now have a better understanding of the concepts and procedures required to perform their

administrative functions, promoting a participatory approach that engenders greater community satisfaction.

MINUSCA Civil Affairs has also contributed to the deployment and installation of more than 1,000 civil servants and state agents as well as facilitating the redeployment (air transport) of more than 240 state agents to hard-to-reach destinations. The vast majority of these public servants work within the education sector.

Deployment of Civil Affairs in 2020



Announcement & Links

Newly-released Survey of Practice in 2020

- “Preventing, Mitigating and Resolving Transhumance-related Conflicts in UN Peacekeeping Settings: A Survey of Practice”: Download the report from <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/civil-affairs>

Useful Links

- Civil Affairs Handbook: <http://dag.un.org/handle/11176/89916>
- Policy and Practice Database (PPDB) Community Engagement/Civil Affairs: <https://bit.ly/3bXJggW>
- iSeek Civil Affairs page: <https://iseek-external.un.org/nyc/dpo/civil-affairs>
- Local Engagement Community of Practice (LECOP) SharePoint site: <https://bit.ly/2KDOcou>
- Quick Impact Project Dashboard (Power BI): <https://bit.ly/397iFbX>

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