

PEACE AND SECURITY

TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED INTERNATIONAL PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS IN AFRICA

A role for civil society

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KEY MESSAGE 1.
The secretariats of mandating organisations should help field missions develop more structured engagements with civil society actors, via specialised units, consultative forums, and civil society advisory committees.



KEY MESSAGE 2.
Women's organisations and actors should be given more weight when undertaking systematic consultations to formulate, implement, and evaluate IPSOs mandates.



KEY MESSAGE 3.
Civil society actors should take the initiative to influence the evolution of mandates, proactively identifying and collaborating with relevant interlocutors.

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SUMMARY

The idea of placing people rather than states at the centre of peace support operations, and prioritising human security during military interventions has been circulating in policy circles for some time. However, some members of the international peace support community are reluctant to embrace it. Despite the pushback against this notion as a policy and a practice, it has become vital for the relevance and credibility of international peace support operations (IPSOs) in Africa. According to the international peace support community, IPSOs, including various types of International Peace and Training Missions, are among the most effective tools for supporting peace and security. In recent years, however, IPSOs have suffered significant setbacks. They include resistance from host countries, perceived ineffectiveness in responding to asymmetrical conflict threats and preventing violence against civilians, and the proliferation of mis- and disinformation that has worked to perpetuate negative sentiments among civilians.

From 2022 to 2023, in response to an apparent “crisis of consent and legitimacy” among host governments and populations regarding some IPSOs in Africa, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) conducted extensive civil society consultations and public surveys through its offices in Mali, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Cameroon, and Ethiopia. They focused on local perceptions of IPSOs as well as civil society experiences in shaping the development and implementation of IPSOs’ mandates. This policy brief draws on insights gained from that initiative. It advocates a shift from ad hoc and sporadic civil society consultation in developing and implementing the mandates of IPSOs in African countries, towards permanent and systematic forms of engagement. This could help address the crises of consent and legitimacy that have emerged in contexts where IPSOs operate.

International Peace Support Operations (IPSOs) are organised international assistance initiatives that help to support, monitor and build peace and prevent the resurgence of violent conflict. They also include military training and equipment programmes for national armies. Recent IPSOs in Africa include those in Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic, the DRC, Mali, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Western Sahara, and the Lake Chad Basin. EU military training missions have also been present in Somalia, the Central African Republic, Mali, the Sahel, and Mozambique.

¹ Compared to the United Nations, the African Union and regional economic communities have made fewer efforts to capture and incorporate local perceptions of peace support operations into the work of field missions and their evolving mandates (See, United Nations Peacekeeping, 2013, 2018).

KEY MESSAGES

KEY MESSAGE 1.

The United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) should recognise civil society's crucial role in implementing IPSOs' mandates in peace operations' doctrines, designating them as active participants in formulating, evaluating, and renewing them.

KEY MESSAGE 2.

The secretariats of mandating organisations should help field missions to develop more structured engagements with civil society actors, via specialised units, consultative forums, and civil society advisory committees.

KEY MESSAGE 3.

Women's organisations and actors should be given more weight when undertaking systematic engagement to formulate, implement, and evaluate IPSOs mandates. Any strategy or programming implemented for their benefit must be accompanied by comprehensive and effective consultation.

KEY MESSAGE 4.

Field missions should systematise "local" engagement. However, the lack of agreement on what constitutes "the local" requires partnerships that maximise missions' positive impacts on people's daily lives. It also requires engagements with grass-root actors not affiliated to any formal civil society organisation (CSO).

KEY MESSAGE 5.

Civil society actors should take the initiative to influence the evolution of mandates, organising themselves inside host nations and amongst troop-contributing countries. They should proactively identify and pursue cooperation with relevant interlocutors in field missions, headquarters of mandating organisations and government representatives and penholders who influence the drafting of mandates.

KEY MESSAGE 6.

The UN, AU, and RECs should negotiate clear and more realistic mandates involving a variety of civil society and state actors. They should actively seek the support of host nations for IPSOs to collaborate with civil society actors throughout the duration of their missions.

KEY MESSAGE 7.

International civil society should support African efforts to improve democratic oversight of IPSOs in mission-hosting and troop-contributing countries, through collaboration with parliamentary committees, funding national surveys, and supporting independent mission evaluations.

This policy brief uses an actor-based definition of civil society. It views civil society as "individuals and groups who voluntarily engage in forms of public participation and action around shared interests, purposes, or values" (OHCHR, 2014:3). "Civil society" encompasses both formal and informal groups, such as non-governmental and non-profit organisations, as well as individuals like human rights advocates, and traditional and religious leaders (OHCHR, 2014:3).

INTRODUCTION

International Peace Support Operations (IPSOs) in Africa have faced new, interlocking and complex security challenges, alongside growing opposition to their authority and presence from host governments and local populations. Increased tensions between the UN and the Malian government led to the early withdrawal of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (See UN Security Council Report, 2023) leaving a vacuum that is likely to be occupied by formerly contracted private military companies and mercenary groups. Similarly, the DRC government demanded the withdrawal of the UN Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) after violent anti-UN demonstrations. As UN peacekeeping missions lose traction owing to varying perceptions of their effectiveness in the UN Security Council (UNSC) as well as within Africa, and as geopolitical tensions between Russia and the West intensify, the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have shifted their focus to increased local ownership of conflict management.

Specifically, the AU and RECs have authorised 16 new peace operations during the past decade, of which ten are currently active. These operations are expected to play a growing role in dealing with conflicts because, unlike UN interventions, they are not always tied to political settlements or peace treaties (Allen, 2023). Currently, only three have been mandated by the AU, namely the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), set for a complete withdrawal by the end of 2024; the AU Military Observer Mission in the Central African Republic (MOUACA); and the modest AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission (AU-MVCM) in Tigray, Ethiopia (Allen, 2023). RECs have spearheaded the remaining operations, with varying levels of support from the AU. Examples include the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) in the DRC (Congo Research Group, 2023), which, like MONUSCO, has been unpopular with local people; the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), which operated uncomfortably alongside a Rwandan

army and police force contingent; and ad hoc security coalitions such as the G5 Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), an initiative by the Lake Chad basin states (Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria) authorised by the AU to combat terrorism and jihadist insurgencies.

While African continental and regional organisations increasingly lead peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions, their partnerships with local civil society remain underdeveloped, constrained or even non-existent. As a result, IPSOs have experienced both local support and resistance, especially when initially welcomed peacekeepers violated the very civilians they were supposed to protect. According to FES partners, many field missions have also struggled to implement protection of civilians (PoC) provisions – partly because of overstretched and ambitious mandates – further alienating local populations and losing credibility. This has heightened civilian concerns about future formats of peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations in several African countries, and increased demands that they be more inclusive and people-centred.

These demands are also based on civilian experiences of peace support operations that have proven difficult for outsiders to understand. One example is the EACRF in the DRC. It cooperated with “regular” armed forces – including its main partner, the DRC military, MONUSCO troops and Ugandan troops – in pursuing ADF rebels under a bilateral agreement (FES, 2023a). Yet the different interests of troop-contributing countries and glaring failures to protect civilians eventually led to its demise (FES, 2023c). IPSOs’ mandates in African countries also involve multilateral organisations with diverse hierarchies, norms, and levels and forms of foreign support. Military training missions conducted by the European Union (EU) in Mali, the Central African Republic, the Sahel and Mozambique are examples. Local security forces have received training and equipment with the dual objectives of preserving territorial integrity and

AU-mandated PSOs are those sanctioned by the AU Assembly, its Peace and Security Council (PSC) or other AU policy organs where the AU exercises direct command, control and management. PSOs that have been “authorised, endorsed, or recognised” by the AU PSC are those in which the AU does not exercise direct command, control and management. Instead, the AU provides additional support through a cooperation agreement or another legal framework in accordance with Article 16 of the PSC Protocol. (See, African Union Doctrine on Peace Support Operations 2019)

countering insurgencies. Yet many civil society actors have little understanding of how these arrangements work, let alone how to engage with or influence them.

Attempts by civil society actors to influence the mandates and activities of IPSOs in these complex settings have run into the challenges of gaining access to decision-makers and understanding and dealing with changes in mandates at various stages of their life cycles. Because field missions are not formally required to engage with civil society actors in substantive ways, such engagements are often ad hoc and dependent on arbitrary personal and professional connections. Given the widening spectrum of civil society actors that exist in conflict-affected settings, field missions need a more explicit and rational framework for engaging with them on a sustained basis. The gradual pivot to “local engagement” in peacekeeping also requires careful consideration by field missions on how to involve the right local stakeholders in a way that fosters genuine empowerment.

Mission mandates provide the best starting point for a systematic engagement with civil society. They provide the legal basis and scope of activities of peace support operations (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.) and the platform on which civil society actors can input into changes concerning conflict management objectives and the particularities of the

peace process they are meant to support. Promoting civil society inclusion in their development and evolution would be a vital step toward more inclusive national and local ownership of the peace processes IPSOs frequently intend to support. Since peace support operations are regulated by Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) between the host state and relevant international organisation, backing from national governments cannot be overlooked (Fleck, 2009:8).

From 2022 to 2023, in the midst of a growing “crisis of consent and legitimacy” of IPSOs among host populations in Africa, the FES conducted civil society consultations and public surveys via its offices in Mali, South Sudan, the DRC, Mozambique, Cameroon and Ethiopia. They focused on local perceptions of IPSOs in those countries as well as civil society experiences in shaping the formulation and execution of IPSOs’ mandates. Based on this initiative, this policy brief discusses why and how civil society involvement in formulating and implementing IPSOs’ mandates needs to be improved, to influence IPSOs’ policy-making at the regional, continental and international levels. First, it addresses the need for people-centred IPSOs in African countries. Next, it deals with the importance of engaging with civil society in formulating, implementing, and evaluating IPSOs’ mandates. It concludes with policy recommendations for key stakeholders

THE NEED FOR PEOPLE-CENTRED IPSOs IN AFRICA

The notion of people-centred IPSOs is closely associated with the concept of “human security”, which has become an important framework for peacebuilding and security interventions, to “shift from the security of states to the security of people” (Commission on Human Security, 2006:26). Despite the challenges and politics of practical implementation, the international peace support community has broadly recognised the importance of this reorientation as a way to improve outcomes for the civilians affected by these interventions. This is both a process and a practice. As a process, it entails moving from a focus solely on state-building and the extension of state authority in IPSOs’ mandates, to interventions that consciously incorporate civilian concerns and priorities. As a practice, it is about conveying the concerns of civilians to those in power and concretely promoting the active participation of civil society actors in formulating IPSOs’ mandates to address challenges traditionally configured IPSOs struggle to manage. It therefore fosters investments in social capital, social cohesion and resilience, to help communities and societies at large sustain peace in the long term (de Coning, 2018).

This is not a new concept. In 2015, the report of the UN’s High-level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIP-PO) called for a shift in its peacekeeping “mindset” towards addressing emerging security threats and peacebuilding challenges through stronger partnerships with civil society (UN, 2015). International peace and security field experts also increasingly recognise that securing long-term peace requires taking account of the concerns, aspirations and priorities of the entire populations of host countries, not just the elite power brokers (see Schia et al., 2013; de Coning and Gelot, 2020; Sedra, 2022). However, certain IPSOs stakeholders who continue to question how and why this engagement should be built have resisted putting this idea into practice. Seven compelling reasons to do so, from FES partners are listed below:

- 1. The credibility and legitimacy of IPSOs among local populations and host governments in Africa are at an all-time low.** Although each case has its own set of local drivers, they all point towards a crisis of expectations about the ability to balance the mandated priorities of strengthening state institutions and ensuring the safety of civilians. They also highlight the importance of mandating

institutions to capture local perceptions in policy making, and understanding why peacekeepers are not welcomed in some contexts.

- 2. There is widespread dissatisfaction with the implementation of PoC provisions,** with many missions accused of endangering the very civilians they are meant to protect (CIVICUS, 2022; Dayal, 2022; FES, 20023e). The demise of MONUSCO and the EACRF in the DRC were linked to perceived failures to protect civilians (FES, 2023a). Similarly, MINUSMA’s forced withdrawal was ascribed to PoC failures amid strong anti-French sentiment and support for Russian paramilitaries. This was complicated by the activities of counterterrorism operations which operated alongside the mission. They included France’s Operation Barkhane, the G5 Sahel Force, and EU training missions – all with distinct mandates and levels of oversight, lacking a clear strategic vision of how to protect civilians in Mali.
- 3. Beyond civilian safety, IPSOs have often overlooked potential adverse effects on the social fabric that can fuel local resentment.** These include accusations by locals of peacekeepers engaging in sexual abuse, as in the DRC and Somalia, which calls for gender considerations and accountability measures to be incorporated into IPSOs’ mandates and practices (Human Rights Watch, 2014; United Nations Peacekeeping, 2023; Kukkuk and Debebe, 2024:7). Other adverse effects also include economic and moral shocks (Aning and Edu-Afful, 2013:17). Peace support operations occur not only in spaces of political, social, and economic shocks but also in areas with long legacies of trauma. Nonetheless, mandating institutions and field missions have paid little attention to the economic impacts of peace support operations and non-security-related consequences.

Women’s experiences with IPSOs, and their roles as agents, rather than victims, in supporting IPSOs’ mandates, have been largely overlooked in policymaking. This is despite the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security requiring women to be consulted at all levels and stages of peacebuilding processes, including those involving IPSOs.

4. IPSOs' mandates typically fail to appreciate the agency of civilians in influencing conflict dynamics.

Notably, the AU and REC PSO doctrines merely define civil society without explicitly stating its desired roles in mandate implementation. By contrast, FES partners report that civil society actors exert considerable influence over armed actors in regions such as Cameroon, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan, serving as intermediaries for peace support missions in the process. Among others, they have facilitated local ceasefires, engaged in hostage negotiations, and effectively petitioned for services and security that were beyond the capabilities of government forces. This function is vital when local people harbour a profound mistrust of peace support missions. FES partners additionally highlight how the recruitment of jihadists from marginalised communities has complicated military operations in certain Mozambican provinces and rural regions of Mali by blurring the distinction between non-combatants and terrorists, although local initiatives led by religious and traditional leaders and a few NGOs have countered this. These examples highlight the importance of recognising and capitalising on the intrinsic conflict-management and resilience capabilities of local communities as effective civilian mediators. It also emphasises the advantages of extending collaboration beyond "organised" civil society.

5. Women are still marginalised in the decision-making processes of peace support operations and contribute remarkably little to the strategies of field missions.

This is despite the disproportionate effects of armed conflict on girls and women and their varied positions and roles during armed conflicts (Hendricks et al., 2023:4-5). Aside from looking at the effects of armed conflict on these populations, there are examples of women in Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mozambique who work as peacebuilders, activists, and humanitarian workers (FES, 2023c). There are incidents too of their direct participation in violent conflicts (Hendricks et al., 2023) showing the dynamic repercussions of conflicts on women. It is therefore vital to formulate IPSOs' mandates with the involvement of women actors, to bring the full range of women's experiences to light and allow for their active and constructive contributions to conflict resolution efforts.

6. IPSOs are mainly perceived as "state-centric",

reflecting public misconceptions about their roles and practical challenges in choosing between state-building and peacebuilding priorities. The original 2007 African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) mandate prioritised the protection of federal institutions and infrastructure over human security and peacebuilding (Kukkuk and Debebe, 2014:10). The UNSC referred to human security and peacebuilding in passing in each of the 23 renewals of the AMISOM mandate (EPON, n.d.:57-59), yet some of those clauses were not made explicit until 2021. Formal mandates in Mali, the DRC and Somalia have gradually shifted toward peacebuilding. Nonetheless, missions have

been chastised by civil society actors for being "too cosy" with governments and regimes (AMISOM and UNMISS), "protecting themselves" (MINUSMA and MONUSCO), and more concerned with "protecting investment interests" of incumbent regimes (SAMIM in Mozambique) at the expense of civilians (FES, 2023e).

7. IPSOs' mandates are widely perceived as unrealistic and overburdened with demands that exceed mission capacity, resulting in unfulfilled local expectations.

IPSOs, especially UN peacekeeping missions, are increasingly expected to address the root causes of conflicts, protect civilians, and promote reconciliation. But they usually lack the resources to do so. High expectations of their ability to meet locals' most pressing needs further suggest a limited understanding of their mandates and priorities. In South Sudan, civil society actors often overestimate the responsibilities and capacities of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), aided by a common confusion between "UN black" (peacekeeping) and "UN blue" (UN agencies).² Many local civil society actors believe that a protection of civilians mandate means that UNMISS should defend individual human rights advocates and campaign for unjustly detained activists, while also assisting the political transition and boosting government functions and services.

8. Civil society is both a participant in and a recipient of disinformation and propaganda related to missions.

Civil society actors can mobilise to either escalate conflicts or catalyse peaceful resolutions. Field missions should pay serious attention to this. Offline and online disinformation and misinformation campaigns targeting MONUSCO and MINUSMA not only exacerbated social divisions and polarisation among local populations, but also endangered them (Trithart, 2022). Very few IPSOs have policies and strategies for preventing or countering this phenomenon. The Strategy for the Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping (2021), aimed at combating false information during field missions, is a step in the right direction. However, this requires partnerships with civilians to develop counter-narratives (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2021). The AU and RECs should not lag behind in anticipating and addressing these risks.

² UN peacekeeping mission vehicles bear black logos; vehicles of UN agencies such as UNDP, UNHCR and others, bear blue logos.

A ROLE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

“National” conflicts are rarely monolithic. Given that their causes, drivers, and outcomes differ by community, field missions must understand which “local” social spaces and actors they need to engage with to address local conflict drivers. However, because of the lack of a shared understanding of what “local” means for field missions, consultations with civil society actors cannot be equated with active and inclusive local engagement (MacGinty, 2014; Kendhammer and Chandler, 2022). Like any other segment of actors, civil society is susceptible to politicisation and division, and may not consistently reflect the diversity of local populations. Nonetheless, missions will come across a range of civil society actors and groups that serve as intermediaries and watchdogs, and offer policy advice and community services to governments, aid organisations and development partners (see United Nations, 2017), which can be leveraged. This places civil society in a unique position to offer crucial insights into changing conflict dynamics and local needs. They can, more effectively, provide feedback into the degree to which mission mandates are being implemented and important performance benchmarks are being reached.

As many civil society actors have reported, these interactions vary depending on IPSOs’ mandates, their own capabilities and capacities, and their relationships with mission headquarters and field offices. In many contexts, where structured mechanisms for mission partnerships with civil society are lacking, a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which civil society actors can influence and assist in the development of mandates and their implementation is required.

FES partners concluded that civil society actors should, more often, proactively engage missions, rather than waiting to be approached by policymakers and mission leaders. This will require familiarity with IPSOs’ mandates and operational doctrines, as well as keeping abreast with mandate review and evaluation timetables. The examples below demonstrate how this has been done before. Civil society actors have used a variety of tactics to contribute to the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of IPSOs mandates as well influencing mission drawdowns and exits.

THE MANDATING PHASE

Civil society actors in South Sudan have directly influenced the UNMISS mandate, mainly by making their way into and being heard in the corridors of power. They have used diverse approaches in the run-up to periodic mandate renewals, such as maintaining strategic dialogues with the P5 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council) and the Troika (the US, the UK and Norway) via local embassies, identifying the pen holders of mandates (within the UNSC), and conveying their concerns and inputs to their local embassy representatives. Another strategy has involved organising meetings with mandate drafting committees via their chairs, exchanging views during joint briefings, and assisting UNMISS mission leaders to convey their inputs to the UNSC.

THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

In South Sudan, a network of civil society actors has set up a dialogue platform with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), which they use to share civilian viewpoints about UNMISS and enhance mission oversight and accountability. The platform allows civilian actors to convey tangible experiences of mission activities and interventions. Conversely, civil society actors in the DRC and the troop-contributing countries to the EACRF – Burundi, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda – used the East African Civil Society Forum to engage directly with the East African Community (EAC) secretary-general about civilian experiences of the intervention prior to the EACRF’s mandate extension. Through this platform, they persuaded the secretary-general that the mission was both problematic and ineffective. In the DRC, selected CSOs have been collecting information about transgressions by peacekeepers, including sexual misconduct, and providing it to field mission offices via formal consultations. However, the common perception has been that their contributions are diluted and that reports “disappear somewhere in the middle”, highlighting the risks of putting too much confidence in ad hoc consultations. In Mali, organisations such as Coalition Citoyenne de la Société Civile have helped to monitor MINUSMA activities, and how national peace agreements are implemented.

LEARNING (MONITORING AND ADAPTATION)

Mission evaluations are best understood as complex, politically charged internal processes hidden from public view. Given their opacity, civil society can help to raise awareness of evaluations and assess progress toward implementing strategic objectives and benchmarks. This would be consistent with the UN's Capstone Doctrine (2008), which recommends setting mandate implementation benchmarks in close coordination with various partners, including civil society actors. Civilians in South Sudan have been able to provide candid feedback on progress toward implementing key benchmarks via the SRSG-civil society platform and UNMISS Civil Affairs Mission-wide consultations. In East Africa, the East African Civil Society Forum's lobbying of the EAC secretary-general not only contributed to the EAC Secretariat's assessment of the EARCF, but also apparently played a role in the decision not to renew its mandate under its prior configuration. Some civil society actors are also reportedly using public perceptions surveys to lobby field missions. But there are few concrete examples.

MISSION DRAWDOWNS AND EXITS³

Although mission withdrawal strategies do not consistently involve input from civil society, there is some agreement in the international peace support community about prioritising the safety of civilians when transferring responsibility for protection activities to national stakeholders (United Nations, 2023). Ensuring the inclusion of civil society voices, particularly those of women-led organisations and representatives of vulnerable groups, is essential. Civilian populations have suffered significant consequences due to premature transitions motivated by political considerations rather than the successful fulfilment of mandates. In these situations, civil society actors can often identify emerging threats and concerns more quickly than IPSOs and help map PoC needs. In Mali, the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) lobbied the UNSC for the sequenced withdrawal of MINUSMA, and to improve temporary measures to protect civilians (CIVIC, 2023), making local needs and fears more visible. In the DRC, MONUSCO initially involved civilians in the working groups responsible for implementing the mission's withdrawal from certain provinces. In Somalia, monthly meetings and quarterly strategic consultations between senior AMISOM officials and Somali Non-State Actors (SONSA) allowed the latter to take part in its transition processes.

ENGAGEMENT WITH A LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE

The preceding examples show the considerable benefits that mandating institutions and field missions can derive from sustained collaboration with civil society actors. While much remains to be done to systematically use their knowledge and expertise in peace support operations, civil society actors can make important contributions in formulating, executing and revising mandates in the following ways:

1. **Conflict analysis and decision-making about IPSOs' configurations and mandates.** Before deploying peace support operations, conflict analysis informed by local voices can help mission headquarters gain a better understanding of local conditions, avoid unintended consequences and configure missions more strategically.
2. **Mission planning, particularly in respect of drawdowns, exit strategies and transitions.** Mission departures have significant consequences for local populations. Therefore, affected populations should be involved and consulted to reduce the risks to civilians arising from withdrawals. Civilians are indeed, well positioned to advise on the conditions for successful handovers, as well as on potential threats.
3. **The development of IPSOs progress indicators and benchmarks.** Civil society actors, as direct beneficiaries of IPSOs, should contribute to the development of key benchmarks for assessing the effectiveness of missions. This will change how the effectiveness of a peace operation is assessed by placing more emphasis on its impact on the day-to-day lives of civilians (see de Coning and Gelot, 2020).
4. **Support for mandatory strategic assessments of IPSOs.** Incorporating the viewpoints of civil society actors and giving priority to the views of women, youth, and marginalized groups helps make mission assessments more closely reflect local realities. This is important since the results of these assessments can be used to modify mandates and re-orient missions.
5. **Support for IPSOs advocacy and public outreach initiatives.** Civil society actors could help missions to improve their strategic communications and messaging to local people. They can also support innovative measures by field-level staff towards local confidence-building and intercommunal dialogues.

³ The UNSC adopted Resolution 2594 in 2021 to guide field missions during drawdowns, including guidance on managing increased civilian risks during and after exits.

CONCLUSION

Recent events present a golden opportunity to reimagine civil society's role in shaping the formulation and implementation of IPSOs mandates. Among them are the changing contexts in which peace support operations are implemented across Africa. IPSOs are not only facing resistance from host countries and populations. They additionally have to cope with a greater prevalence of unconventional warfare and disinformation, which calls for stronger and more innovative civil society partnerships. Political consensus about the UNSC's approach to addressing African crises has also dwindled, while decision-making about future IPSOs arrangements has shifted from global to regional organisations. However the increasing internationalisation of armed conflict and continued geopolitical competition among powerful countries will invariably keep members of the international community and Africa locked in discussions about successful IPSOs arrangements.

This is an opportunity to take a different approach and harness the untapped potential of civil society actors in making IPSOs mandates more people-centered. Civil society's experiences with IPSOs strongly indicate that future IPSOs mandate

should incorporate local perspectives and properly take local agency into account to enable the space for local ownership of preventing conflicts and sustaining peace to emerge. Involving civil society actors in the mandating of IPSOs could also help peace support missions to avoid or at least mitigate unintended consequences. Ultimately, IPSOs rely on their credibility among local populations. Their mandates should accurately and systematically capture local sentiments to improve their responsiveness and accountability to locals, who are essentially, the beneficiaries of these interventions.

Civil society actors share the responsibilities for making IPSOs more accountable and locally grounded. They cannot just wait for systems and practices to change. This is why FES partners have urged civil society actors to be proactive and pragmatic in their interactions with IPSOs' headquarter and mission representatives, as well as those responsible for formulating and adapting mandates. But, civil society actors must make concerted efforts to self-organise and convene in IPSOs' host states and troop-contributing countries, given their diversity, resources, and reach in conflict contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the UN and the EU:

There is need to formulate clear operational guidelines for the engagement of field missions with civil society to enable it to play an active role in the evolution of mandates. Future mandates should provide clear and systematic procedures for civil society inputs into formulating, executing and evaluating IPSOs' mandates.

To the AU and RECs:

Doctrines should lay down provisions for civil society engagement, covering all aspects of mission design, implementation and evaluation. This should be accompanied by clear guide-

lines for how civil society actors can work with mission headquarters and field offices to provide inputs into the formulation and revision of mandates.

To civil society actors:

Civil society actors should be proactive in learning about the structures, processes, staff, and languages of the international, continental and regional organisations that mandate and support IPSOs. This would allow them to identify and lobby key role players at the headquarters of mandating organisations, and their field missions, as well as other organisations involved in designing, implementing and revising mandates.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADF	Allied Democratic Forces (Islamist rebel group in Uganda and the DRC)
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ATMIS	African Union Transition Mission in Somalia
AU	African Union
AU-MVCM	African Union Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mechanism
BTI	Bertelsmann Transformation Index
CIVIC	Centre for Civilians in Conflict
CIVICUS	World Alliance for Citizen Participation
CSO	Civil society organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
EACRF	East African Community Regional Force
EU	European Union
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
G5 Sahel	Group of Five for the Sahel (regional intergovernmental organisation)
HIPPO	United Nations High-level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations
IPSO	International Peace Support Operation
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MONUSCO	United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the DRC
MOUACA	African Union Observer Mission in the Central African Republic
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
P5	Group of five permanent members of the UN Security Council
PoC	Protection of civilians
PSC	(African Union) Peace and Security Council
PSO	Peace Support Operation
REC	Regional Economic Community
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAMIM	SADC Mission in Mozambique
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SONSA	Somali Non-State Actors
SRSO	UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General
UN	United Nations
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

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TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED INTERNATIONAL PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS IN AFRICA

A role for civil society



KEY MESSAGE 1.

The United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) should recognise civil society's crucial role in implementing IPSOs' mandates in peace operations' doctrines, designating them as active participants in formulating, evaluating, and renewing them.



KEY MESSAGE 2.

The secretariats of mandating organisations should help field missions to develop more structured engagements with civil society actors, via specialised units, consultative forums, and civil society advisory committees.



KEY MESSAGE 3.

Women's organisations and actors should be given more weight when undertaking systematic engagement to formulate, implement, and evaluate IPSOs mandates. Any strategy or programming implemented for their benefit must be accompanied by comprehensive and effective consultation.

Further information on this topic can be found here:
pssc.fes.de