

COMMUNITY LIAISON ASSISTANTS IN UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS



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Survey of Practice

DPKO-DFS/DPET/ Policy and Best Practices Service

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since their introduction in MONUSCO in 2010, Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) have become a successful tool to support community engagement in peace operations. Research for this survey has indicated that the experiences with CLAs have been largely positive and their contribution to mandate implementation is recognized across mission components. To develop a common understanding of CLAs, and to build institutional knowledge in peacekeeping regarding key issues associated with their deployment, this survey of practice proposes the following definition of CLAs: National staff, deployed alongside uniformed components of United Nations peacekeeping operations and managed by Civil Affairs components as one part of the broader community engagement work of missions.

In addition to MONUSCO, CLAs are now deployed in MINUSCA, UNMISS and MINUSMA. Three of the four missions have embedded the CLAs directly with uniformed components, while UNMISS decided to pool them under the Heads of Field Offices. While the difference in these approaches is to some extent dictated by the needs and circumstances on the ground, our research found that CLAs offer the greatest strategic benefit when embedded directly with uniformed components. In fact this distinguishes CLAs from all other civilian peacekeeping personnel at the local level. It is by working alongside the United Nations military or police components that CLAs allow missions to extend their civilian presence and enhance their ability to engage with communities and local authorities in a regular and more accessible manner. In situations where this approach is not suitable for political or security reasons, and where national staff therefore cannot be deployed in line with the above definition, it is recommended that the term CLA not be used.

The role of CLAs has traditionally focused on support to protection of civilians activities (including contributions to community protection needs assessments, managing Community Alert Networks, and facilitating the work of Joint Protection Teams), but thanks to their cultural and language skills, CLAs are also able to improve the interface between communities and missions across mandated tasks. As such, they have the potential to become a critical tool for the implementation of a mission's broader community engagement strategy, *inter alia* contributing to relations between the mission and the population; conflict analyses and situational awareness; facilitating social cohesion and reconciliation initiatives; supporting the reestablishment and extension of state authority; and improving strategic communications. Despite the flexibility of CLAs, there are limits to the role they can and should play, mainly because of security and capacity considerations. Most importantly though, there needs to be a clear understanding that CLAs cannot substitute for a mission's community engagement strategy, for which Civil Affairs components and others use a number of tools, and of which the CLA model is but one.

The success of CLAs depends on a range of strategic-conceptual, operational and administrative issues that missions have to navigate. This survey discusses the approaches missions have taken and uses good practices from the field to suggest potential solutions. Based on this analysis, a list of recommendations summarizes the key considerations for missions during the design and roll-out of a CLA programme. The degree of applicability of these recommendations will vary between field missions depending on their particular environment and needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic-conceptual

1. CLAs should be identified as national staff deployed alongside uniformed components of United Nations peacekeeping operations under the overall management of Civil Affairs to implement a broader community engagement strategy.

2. CLAs should be seen as a tool for community engagement, not as a strategy in and of themselves. As such, while the focus has often been on protection activities, CLAs should be in a position to support other mandated tasks as well.
3. Missions should deploy CLAs in each military base where there is a need for local engagement and the corresponding presence of a Civil Affairs component. To ensure sufficient coverage and allow for compensatory time off, each base should have at least two CLAs.
4. Missions should develop a clear concept of what is expected from CLAs, how they fit in with other community engagement mechanisms and the mission-wide POC Strategy, as well as other relevant areas of work. Senior leadership should demonstrate support for this concept.

Operational

5. Missions should develop targeted recruitment measures to ensure an adequate number of female CLAs are deployed. During this on-going process Missions should consider mobile teams of female CLAs to balance female presence.
6. Missions should ensure effective communication with the Force on the CLA concept and how it can benefit their work, before the deployment of CLAs. Missions should also ensure that military commanders receive joint induction training with 'their' CLA, as well as be involved in the CLAs performance evaluation, to improve ownership of the model and establish working relationships.
7. Missions should ensure thorough training of CLAs before deployment, covering a range of mandated tasks that are relevant for their specific duty station.
8. Missions should provide continuous training of CLAs during their deployment, in particular after changes to the mandate. As part of continuous training, missions should provide CLAs with feedback on their performance and organize regular debriefings jointly with other relevant components.
9. Civil Affairs staff members from mission HQ or regional offices should regularly visit all duty stations to which CLAs are deployed to demonstrate interest, further good civil military collaboration and effective information exchange, and build their own understanding of realities on the ground.

Administrative

10. Missions should determine the expected mobility needs of CLAs before their deployment and identify the most suitable contractual arrangements to allow flexibility while respecting national staff rights. To this end, close collaboration between substantive and support sections is critical.
11. All mission bases should be made official duty stations in the United Nations system.
12. Missions should establish dedicated management capacity to handle the amount of work associated with initiating and managing a CLA programme.
13. All relevant stakeholders should determine logistical support requirements for CLAs, including office space in the base, communication equipment, and transportation, before deployment. All costs associated with these arrangements should be factored into funding considerations.
14. CLAs shall receive benefits and entitlements established for the duty stations where they serve in accordance with the established framework.
15. Should CLA's be required to travel with the military contingents to which they are assigned, they would be entitled to receive DSA in line with the established framework for official travel.
16. In the long term, Missions could rotate CLAs in one-to-two year cycles to prevent burnout, within the same region, avoid bias, and compensate for particular hardship duty stations (the feasibility of this depends on a flexible recruitment solution as well as on ethnic and security realities on the ground).

1. Introduction

Experience has shown that good relationships with local communities are a critical success factor for United Nations peace operations. As was pointed out by the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), and subsequently reiterated by the Secretary-General, community engagement builds confidence in political processes and responsible state structures, and allows field missions to protect civilians more effectively. In light of linguistic and cultural obstacles, however, missions have found it difficult to engage communities and build trust-based relationships. This has had a negative effect on missions' ability to protect civilians, and atrocities have occurred close to peacekeeping bases without missions being aware. The events of July/August 2010 in the Banamukira territory in the Democratic Republic of the Congo serve as a dark example in this context. In response, peacekeeping operations have developed a series of community engagement tools, including Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs).



CLAs are national staff deployed alongside uniformed personnel to support the broader community engagement strategies of missions. First deployed in MONUSCO in 2010, they have played a crucial role in carrying out protection of civilians (POC)-related activities. Since then, the function of CLAs has increasingly expanded to support mandate implementation beyond physical POC, including in areas such as social cohesion, conflict management, and the restoration and extension of state authority. Following the positive experience in MONUSCO, the CLA model has been replicated and adapted in MINUSMA, UNMISS, and MINUSCA.

Despite the growing deployment of CLAs in different mission settings, and the increasing interest in the model from within and outside of United Nations peacekeeping, there has been only a limited amount of stock taking across missions on common challenges and opportunities associated with this model of community engagement. This survey of practice therefore looks broadly at the experiences in MONUSCO, MINUSCA, UNMISS, and MINUSMA to assess the added value, define the parameters of the role of CLAs, and provide guidance for the possible future deployment of CLAs in other missions.

To some degree, the peace operations with currently active CLA programmes have taken diverging approaches to the implementation of the concept. This is true in particular for UNMISS, where realities on the ground forced the Mission to adapt the CLA model. While doing so is the prerogative of missions, this survey reflects what the research team considers best practice based on an analysis of experiences, lessons, risks and opportunities. The survey also provides recommendations and practical advice on planning and deploying CLAs in the future.

2. Methodology

The survey draws on a desk review of existing materials, such as the CLA Best Practice Review 2014 (MONUSCO), the CLA Handbook (MONUSCO), and relevant planning documents from other missions, as well as on primary research. Field visits were undertaken to MONUSCO, UNMISS and MINUSMA, and interviews conducted with relevant staff at UNHQ and via telephone with MINUSCA. All in all, interviews were held with CLAs, Civil Affairs teams within which they work, communities with whom they liaise, Heads of field offices, uniformed components of United Nations peace operations, substantive and support sections in field missions, including planners, budget officers, human resource officers, and legal advisers, and non-mission partners. The research was conducted jointly by the Civil Affairs and Protection of Civilians Teams in DPET/PBPS.

3. Definition

Research for this study has demonstrated that the understanding and definition of CLAs varies widely amongst stakeholders. This is true not only with respect to different interpretations between missions, but even between components of the same mission. To maximize the strategic benefit CLAs can offer as a community engagement tool, and to build institutional knowledge across missions regarding strategic, operational and administrative tasks associated with their deployment, it is important to establish a common understanding and approach.

Community Liaison Assistants were first established in MONUSCO to fill a gap in community engagement skills and local knowledge for uniformed peacekeepers. In particular in areas where no other civilian capacity is deployed, CLAs have the potential to extend the scope and quality of field missions' engagement with the local population. In this regard, a particular focus has often been placed on support to protection activities, though it is clear that CLAs as a tool have the potential for wider application and can be adapted according to the particular environment and needs on the ground. This basic premise remains largely unchanged after expansion to new missions and contexts.

While recognising that missions may deviate from the following definition to fit their own needs, this study finds that CLAs, for policy, planning and budgetary purposes, should generally be understood as:

Definition of CLAs

National staff, deployed alongside uniformed components of United Nations peacekeeping operations and managed by Civil Affairs components as one part of the broader community engagement work of missions.

Given the specific management and training requirements for CLAs, and for the sake of consistency across missions as well as coherence in engaging legislative and budgetary committees at United Nations Headquarters, it is recommended that national staff who do not meet this definition not be referred to as CLAs. This is intended to sharpen a common understanding of the CLA concept and in no way aims to preclude the deployment of national staff in other or even similar capacities.

4. Overview of CLA deployment

The status and model of CLA deployment, including administrative, management and reporting arrangements, vary to some degree between peacekeeping operations. Whereas MONUSCO, having first introduced CLAs in 2010, has developed an advanced CLA concept over the years, other missions are at a much earlier stage in that respect. Overall, the four missions currently deploying CLAs largely take the same approach, although some conceptual and operational differences exist.

As of July 2016, a total of 308 CLAs are deployed across four missions. In MONUSCO, MINUSCA and MINUSMA, CLAs are embedded with uniformed personnel to enhance their capacity for community engagement, where Civil Affairs is responsible for the management of CLAs. UNMISS assigned the CLAs to the Heads of Field Offices instead, to provide support across components at the field level. Depending on security and other considerations, CLAs either live on military bases of the respective mission, or find accommodation in the local communities.

Recruitment has posed a challenge for all four missions, in particular concerning the share of female CLAs, but also with regard to ensuring a balanced set of CLAs in terms of ethnic, linguistic and geographical representation. These challenges are typically rooted in the often unequal access to education, as well as in the social and security conditions on the ground.

For more information and mission-specific summaries of administrative, logistical and operational arrangements surrounding CLAs, see Annex B.

5. Concept, scope and impact

Community Liaison Assistants play a key role in extending the mission's presence at the local level and helping to engage with and understand communities in ways that are distinct from other national or international Civil Affairs staff, or military/police language assistants. Research for this survey of practice found that CLAs added the greatest value where (1) they are embedded with uniformed components and (2) they support the wider community engagement needs of the mission as an integrated part of the Civil Affairs function. These factors allow them to serve as a 'force multiplier' through their understanding of local communities' perceptions, their ability to engage with communities in a reciprocal manner, and their capacity to reinforce a range of mandated activities in line with missions' broader strategic approach.

5.1 Embedded with uniformed components

A defining feature of CLAs, therefore, should be their deployment directly with uniformed components. Supporting and enabling the Force's (and sometimes UNPOL's) work is a major strategic benefit of CLAs, and the degree of backing for the function from officers consulted was extremely high. While the military's appreciation of CLAs may in part be due to the shortage of language assistants for contingents, a gap CLAs are able to fill, it goes beyond this limited interpretation of their function. Officers expressed particular appreciation for the more expansive roles that CLAs have been able to take on, from independently developing a network of community contacts, to providing analysis of local politics and planning and engaging in reconciliation activities.

While many national or international staff members engage with communities, only CLAs are directly embedded with uniformed components. This makes it useful to have a separate designation for them, in recognition of the fact that the close working relationship with the military or police means that their *modus operandi*, training and support needs are qualitatively distinct from other staff members.

- To avoid confusion and provide targeted support to this function across missions, it is recommended that where other national staff also have a primary function in engaging with communities – but are not embedded with uniformed components due to the particular circumstances and needs on the ground – they are not designated as “CLAs” but continue to be described as national Civil Affairs staff, or national staff of other components.

An exception to the embedding of CLAs with uniformed personnel may be situations of transition, in which uniformed components begin to withdraw but the need remains for an ongoing civilian presence on the ground. Community Liaison Assistants are likely to have the best networks to ensure this limited civilian presence is constructive (and cost effective). The joint UNDP/DPA/DPKO/DFS project on transitions has planned to conduct in 2016 two lessons learned studies on security drawdown and closure of field offices, respectively. The findings of these studies with respect to civilian presence during transition periods of mission life cycles may inform mission leadership in their decision making regarding CLA deployment in such cases.

Positive impact on the military

A Company Commander in Sake explained the value to him of CLAs by relating an incident in early 2015. During a routine patrol in North Kivu, an armed member of the FARDC approached a MONUSCO patrol with an unusual and suspect level of speed and urgency. The patrol interpreted this approach as a hostile act and took up a defensive position. As the situation grew more tense, the CLA was able to interact with the FARDC element and diffuse the misunderstanding, which could have potentially led to a serious incident.

5.2 Integrated Civil Affairs function and cross-mission support



As the mission component responsible for supporting local-level engagement across a range of mandates – from protection of civilians, to local-level conflict resolution, to the restoration and extension of state authority – Civil Affairs assumes a cross-mission support function that stretches beyond the protection of civilians. As per the DPKO and DFS Policy Directive on Civil Affairs, this includes, inter alia, ensuring that missions as a whole have a good understanding of community and conflict dynamics across the area of operations, that there is an effective information flow between communities and the

mission – facilitating rapid response where necessary – and that good relationships are fostered on the ground between the mission and the population.

Civil Affairs components have developed the CLA tool to increase their ability to perform these functions effectively, and CLAs should be seen in this light – as an integrated extension of the Civil Affairs function. As such, three main roles are envisioned for CLAs:

- Community liaison – community engagement, sensitization, dissemination of messages, confidence building, relationship building between mission and population, organizing and facilitating meetings, management of expectations etc.
- Information gathering and reporting – early warning, situational awareness, inform planning and operations, identify community needs, satisfy specific information requirements, etc.
- Programme implementation – capacity building of communities and local institutions, perception surveys, etc.

Since CLAs frequently live and work in remote areas that are difficult or impossible to reach for other United Nations civilian staff, their work is essential to the implementation of the above-mentioned core Civil Affairs functions. It is precisely in these settings that CLAs offer the greatest added benefit, as they provide a civilian capacity to an otherwise strictly military presence. As field staff have framed it, this gives eyes and ears to the military contingents on the ground. The fact that CLAs are a long-term presence in the midst of regular military rotations adds further value. On the part of the military, Civil-Military Coordination (CIMIC) officers make natural counterparts for CLAs.

- **Missions should deploy CLAs in each military base where there is a need for local engagement and the corresponding presence of a Civil Affairs component. To ensure sufficient coverage and allow for compensatory time off, each base should have at least two CLAs.**

Given their status as an extension of Civil Affairs and often as the sole civilian presence in their area of deployment, CLAs frequently take on cross-mission representation roles, including through information gathering and the organisation of field visits. Their community networks are often relied upon by Human Rights, Child Protection and other substantive components, who report that the presence of CLAs supports their work. In general, however, CLAs should not be seen as just ‘fixers’ for all mission components at the local level – though facilitating contacts for all mission components is an important part of their role – but as a part of the overall Civil Affairs capacity to provide the mission with effective community engagement support, typically with a protection of civilians focus.

Working with other mission components

In Maloum, a remote village in the Central African Republic, a CLA was alerted about an illegal detention center through his network of local contacts. The CLA, in coordination with the Human Rights Division who did not have a field presence in that area, assisted with the negotiation for the release of the illegal prisoners who were subjected to forced labour by armed groups.

CLAs also have a role to play in public information campaigns. This may include sensitizing the population on peace agreements and educating communities about the mandate and activities of the given peace operation. In MONUSCO, for instance, CLAs contribute to the implementation of stabilisation projects by building local grassroots support around the ‘Islands of Stability’ concept.

- **In this light, it is crucial to emphasize that CLAs are a tool for community engagement, not a strategy in and of themselves. In fact, CLAs are only one of several mechanisms that missions use to engage communities, which may also include local perception surveys, public information work (including through United Nations radio stations) and others. To ensure the strategic and coordinated use of these tools, and in line with the conclusions of the recent High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) and the subsequent report of the Secretary-General, it is recommended that missions develop broad strategies for local engagement and civilian protection, including coordinated outreach and messaging across components.**

5.3 Focus on the protection of civilians

As recognised by the HIPPO report, protecting civilians is a core obligation of the UN, with a particular emphasis on the importance of unarmed protection and a people-centred approach. CLAs, for reasons outlined in this survey, represent one of the best tools available to missions in this regard.

Support to the protection of civilians mandate was the original *raison d'être* for the creation of CLAs and continues to be at the core of their activities. This includes conducting consultations with communities to determine protection needs, providing threat analysis, early warning and planning assistance to the mission, supporting advocacy and reconciliation initiatives, and fostering engagement and dialogue within and amongst the communities, as well as between communities and the mission. Due to their in-depth understanding of community perceptions and protection needs, CLAs play a fundamental role in ensuring that missions' protection activities respond to local needs and priorities, and in anticipating, preventing and mitigating risks.

Numerous military interlocutors emphasised the importance of CLAs not only in supporting the military's understanding of conflict dynamics and its planning for protection activities, but also the CLAs' direct engagement with communities and local authorities to reduce tension and avert conflict. CLAs, for instance, have in some cases managed Community Alert Networks, a mechanism that provides pre-paid mobile phones in the DRC to key community contacts who can notify the mission of security concerns. Community Liaison Assistants have also assisted communities in the establishment of community protection plans that both promote local ownership and build local capacity on protection. These plans then assist the military commander in the area to map the community's protection concerns and plan peacekeepers' patrols, posture and engagement accordingly. In the context of Joint Protection Teams, CLAs ensure the continuous engagement and follow-up by the respective mission, while the local networks of CLAs have in many places enabled missions to diffuse tensions between communities and prevent fighting.

Protection through community-Force collaboration

From 14 to 21 January 2016, MINUSCA Civil Affairs temporarily deployed the Carnot CLA to the commune of Niem-Yelewa that was confronted with a deteriorating security situation due to the presence of armed groups, causing massive displacement and limiting civilians' freedom of movement. During his deployment, the CLA sensitized communities about the mandate of MINUSCA and managed to re-establish trust between them and the Force. As a result of the better collaboration and an enhanced understanding of the threat environment, MINUSCA was able to conduct targeted patrols and help to improve the security situation in Niem-Yelewa.

5.4 Local knowledge

Challenges of balanced representation

In 2011, UNMISS had almost no national staff members from the marginalized Murle ethnic group, limiting the mission's ability to engage with that population. In contrast, recent recruitment of CLAs at UNMISS has focused specifically on Murle language skills and local knowledge, with professional office skills and university degrees deemphasised.

Community Liaison Assistants, like many national staff, are highly valued for their knowledge of local language, understanding of community dynamics, and ability to engage with the population. While writing, analytical and office skills are important as well, in-depth knowledge of particular communities and strong people skills are the quintessential characteristics of CLAs. In view of this, it is important for missions to recruit a diverse group of CLAs that are in a position to facilitate interactions with various communities.

In many peacekeeping environments, however, development is uneven, with small, educated elites often concentrated in pockets of power. As a result, nationals qualified to take up professional posts in the mission often hail from similar backgrounds, while groups from the ethnic, linguistic or geographic periphery may have

little or no representation among mission national staff. This same problem is reflected amongst CLAs, with missions struggling to recruit a set of staff that represents and can relate to all major communities in the area of operations.



5.5 Limits of the role

While the flexibility of CLAs is among their key benefits, the functions they can fulfil have limits and they cannot replace a broader community engagement strategy for peacekeeping missions. As discussed below, the fact that CLAs frequently work in remote or insecure environments places them at greater risk, limiting the roles they can or should play. All CLAs are important in gathering information from communities, for instance, but there is a danger in treating or tasking CLAs as ‘spies’ or informants in their communities, rather than as mediators and interlocutors. Also, unlike the ‘sensitizers’ used in DDR campaigns, who are tasked with spreading messages to encourage defection from armed groups, the value of CLAs lies in the trust they build with communities, making the integrity of their message and a two-way dialogue with populations of overarching importance.

In order to establish this trust and create constructive relationships with communities, CLAs need to receive adequate training, operate within their role and use a conflict sensitive approach to all activities. With respect to training, and in particular regarding cross-mission representation tasks, CLAs cannot be expected to represent substantive sections without prior training. As such, a mission’s capacity to train CLAs will determine to some extent the limits of how CLAs can be used (see further below). Positive relationships between CLAs and communities will also be based on the effectiveness of the missions’ alert and response system, as well as the feedback the CLA offers to communities.

Despite the best efforts, however, the performance and reliability of CLAs can be compromised by bias, a lack of rigor or critical judgement, or simply a lack of contextual understanding on the part of the CLA. Indeed, in one of the missions interviewed for this survey staff expressed concerns that CLAs could be negatively affected by their community ties. Nevertheless, most stakeholders felt that the risk of bias from

CLAs turned out not to be as prominent as they had feared initially, mostly because missions had other means of triangulating information. In general, interlocutors felt that the quality of information delivered by CLAs was very high and often more reliable than other sources.

6. Key considerations

Research for this survey highlighted that the success of the CLA concept in peacekeeping operations depends on missions' ability to maximize the strategic benefit of CLAs and resolve challenges associated with their deployment. This chapter provides an overview of key factors that require consideration.

6.1 Recruitment and management

Across all four missions surveyed, the recruitment and management of CLAs was named as one of the central obstacles facing missions in this context. Issues such as gender balance, mobility, and reporting lines represent challenges that demand consideration.

A. General management issues

In most missions where CLAs are currently deployed, they are recruited and managed by Civil Affairs. While other sections could, in principle, recruit and manage CLAs, the nature of the Community Liaison work, the benefits of consistency across missions, and the broader goal of developing United Nations staff expertise in the management of CLA programmes argue in favour of continuing with Civil Affairs as the civilian home of CLAs. In general, the uniformed components welcome this arrangement, though some issues warrant consideration.

What can realistically be expected of CLAs depends on the pool of candidates available to the mission. Throughout the process of creating and implementing the CLA concept, expectations of mission components need to be managed. Well-performing CLAs are often in high demand and can find themselves overwhelmed with taskings and expectations from mission components.

- **A mission-specific CLA concept and guidance need to be developed with the local capacity in mind.**

As CLAs are primarily based in remote locations, managing them effectively has presented a challenge for Civil Affairs. This includes offering adequate support as well as monitoring operational tasks and performance management, and holding CLAs accountable for their work.

- **Strong management is key for empowering CLAs to do their work effectively and an important mitigating factor against concerns such as bias or abuse of power by CLAs.**

Since uniformed commanders oversee the daily work of CLAs, they are in a position to provide valuable input into the performance evaluation process of CLAs. Not only does this offer a more holistic performance review, it also creates an opportunity to strengthen relationships between Civil Affairs and the uniformed component, and gives the military or police a stronger sense of ownership. Since uniformed personnel are not technically authorized to input into e-Performance or other civilian performance management tools, this would have to be arranged informally between Civil Affairs and the respective commanders.

- **The Civil Affairs Supervisors should liaise closely with the relevant military/police personnel to this effect, and could expressly add a paragraph in the performance evaluation reflecting their feedback.**

B. Recruitment and mobility

Recruitment is driven by the particular environment of each mission and influenced by ethnic, linguistic and other considerations. In UNMISS, for example, the significance of ethnic and community tension has complicated CLA recruitment. Key considerations for recruitment decisions are a combination of interpersonal and communication skills, as well as the command of the local language and an in-depth knowledge of the cultural and conflict dynamics in the relevant area.

- **Making Civil Affairs responsible for the recruitment of CLAs allows such contextual sensitivities to be taken into account and ensures their work with communities serves the mission as a whole. Recruitment committees that include staff from uniformed and substantive components, as relevant for the respective mission areas; have proven to be an effective tool in ensuring that the right candidates are selected.**

Across all missions, the recruitment of female CLAs has been a challenge. This is particularly problematic as the lack of female CLAs can have a negative impact on a mission's ability to engage local communities. The cultural fabric of communities often prevents male CLAs from effectively liaising with women, thus limiting missions' engagement opportunities. Factors complicating the recruitment of female CLAs include a shortage of qualified female national staff in some locations due to their relative lack of access to education and prior employment experience, as well as the living and working conditions on United Nations military bases.

Recruiting female CLAs

MONUSCO has overcome problems with recruiting and deploying women by holding recruitment exercises aimed exclusively at female CLAs, and by deploying on a temporary basis mobile teams of female CLAs who do not sleep on military bases. These mobile teams have added significant value to the overall CLA programme.

Research for this survey shows that contingents from different countries have different attitudes towards working with female CLAs. Those who have women already within their armed forces tend to see the deployment of female CLAs as beneficial and unproblematic. Contingents without female troops cite concerns about having to provide 'extra security' for women, whom they perceived to be more at risk than male CLAs; some contingents also stated that they would be opposed to having women sleep on their bases. The risk of sexual exploitation and abuse in deploying female national staff on an all-male military base is also a concern. In Mali, moreover, concerns were raised that it might be problematic – and possibly pose a security risk – for women to be seen by communities working alongside men, both for the women themselves and for their husbands.

- **For those missions where female CLAs are deployed, arrangements need to be made to ensure female CLAs do not have to sleep on all-male military bases, as was done in MONUSCO (see text box). In addition, careful consideration needs to be given to ensuring female CLAs feel safe and have secure means to report any incidents of misconduct or abuse. Missions should also develop targeted recruitment measures to ensure an adequate number of female CLAs are deployed, in cooperation with relevant sections. During this on-going process, missions should consider mobile teams of female CLAs to increase/balance female presence in the field.**

A further challenge all missions face is the disconnect between staff regulations governing the deployment and mobility of national staff, and missions' requirement for speed and flexibility when it comes to deploying and moving CLAs. This requirement varies from mission to mission, and will likely vary also at different times during the life cycle of a mission.

- **Relocate CLAs on a temporary basis to other duty stations (through TDY or on official business) and pay corresponding DSA:** This option arguable offers the greatest degree of flexibility, allowing the mission to move CLAs on short notice in response to operational needs as long as the staff member agrees and the mission pays the required DSA. Temporary re-assignments or official travel of national staff can last for up to three months at a time, after which the staff member has to return to the official duty station. Some missions could allow the CLA to remain only briefly at his or her official duty station before being re-deployed on temporary assignment to the desired duty station. The return to the official duty station could be utilized for a debrief session with the CLA's civilian coordinator or supervisor. While this option depends on the availability of sufficient funding for the extra cost of paying DSA, expenses associated with this model can be significantly reduced if CLAs are provided with accommodation and meals on the military base during their temporary deployment, which would cut the DSA to a minimum (though compensation for the military would have to be discussed with the contingent in question).

When first recruiting and deploying CLAs, key challenges involve the local hiring rules, as well as the lack of nominal duty stations in some of the areas where CLAs are deployed. The perceived need to hire locally has on occasion posed a challenge for missions in remote areas, where the most qualified candidates have left to move to larger towns or the capital city, and missions are requested



to recruit staff under local hire conditions despite the staff not being present in the area. Furthermore, political, ethnic, linguistic, and security factors also influence hiring decisions, including the need for CLAs to maintain a degree of impartiality that may at times clash with the local hire requirement. The implication of the locally recruited rule is that the mission will not be responsible for the staff members' relocation to the duty station. Therefore, if CLAs organize their own transportation to the area of a duty station, they can be hired under local recruitment regulations. However, in remote duty stations of peacekeeping operations, the reality remains that transportation means are usually not available, and even if they are, tend to be very unsafe, placing incoming staff member at high risk. This rule also has implications for the ability to re-deploy CLAs to a different duty station should the base close or relocate.

- **Clarify the criteria defining what may be considered as locally hired staff:** There is no current legal framework of what constitutes 'commuting distance' as referenced in staff rule 4.4., there is thus some flexibility in how the mission could apply this concept. While some missions define "local hiring" strictly, such as hiring within a 40 kilometre radius, such definitions do not arise from UN administrative regulations and can be reasonably adjusted at the mission's prerogative. A more flexible interpretation of "local hiring," such as hiring with a province or sector, can

assist the mission in improving recruitment and management based on to the realities of the context at hand (displacement, remote location, education levels required, etc.).

Peacekeeping bases in remote areas may fall outside the area of a recognized duty station. If CLAs are hired for such a location, will be considered on official travel and receive applicable DSA.

- **With the roll-out of UMOJA, this issue should become less prominent, as the system will require a duty station be established for all United Nations bases, irrespective of size and whether or not civilians are deployed.**

Regarding the assignment of a duty station, once deployed, CLAs have particular mobility needs to ensure their usefulness as a resource, especially when embedded with military contingents. It is important, therefore, that the deployment modalities of CLAs are flexible in order to allow them to be redeployed to other bases as necessary. The need to move CLAs from one duty station to another could arise for any number of reasons, including for instance:

- Threats to CLAs emerging in specific locations;
- Evolving military deployment;
- Recruitment of new CLAs and need to pair them with experienced CLAs;
- Hardship locations requiring rotation to avoid burnout;
- Risk of bias increases with the duration of deployment;
- Inability of CLAs to establish trust with local communities;
- Issues relating to the relationship of the CLA to the local community or the Commander of the Force.

Even though flexibility is critical within the CLA functions, United Nations rules governing the contracts of national staff require that a duty station is assigned on recruitment, and preclude the reassignment of national staff from one duty station to another. As a result, in cases where a mission would like to move a CLA for any of the above reasons, the contract needs to be terminated (or simply not extended) and s/he needs to be re-recruited for the new duty station, which is a cumbersome and slow process. Since this rule, which at its core is designed to protect national staff, originates with the International Civil Service Commission, any change to this would likely need to take place at the Member State level, requiring a level of engagement that may lie beyond the scope of this survey, and is uncertain to achieve results. **The negative impact of this rule on effective field operations is highlighted here for the purposes of future reference by policy makers in the field of human resources. Peacekeeping currently faces a paradoxical situation where missions are required to strengthen community engagement but are given only limited flexibility to develop and implement the necessary liaison mechanisms at the local level.** As, the current system does not reflect the realities of conflict zones and is not well suited to recruiting and managing local staff in such situations, there are a number of possibilities that managers may pursue to mitigate the mobility challenge, each of which have their own pros and cons:

- **CLAs can be hired as ‘individual contractors’ or through Local Individual Contractor Agreement (LICA) contracts administered by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS): This option allows for maximum flexibility in terms of mobility and redeployment of CLAs, as national staff rules do not apply to individual contractors. Provided they consent, individual contractors can be moved between duty stations without administrative burden. However, this option brings with it considerable downsides and should not be evaluated solely through an administrative lens. For instance, since CLAs under this arrangement are not technically staff members of the peacekeeping mission, issues surrounding the handling of sensitive information**

and the perceptions of local communities need to be taken into consideration. In addition, the compensation package for individual contractors is less attractive than for national staff, making it unlikely that CLAs who are already on a G-level contract would agree to convert their status from national staff to individual contractor.

- **Create rosters of CLAs:** To expedite the hiring process of CLAs in situations where new CLAs are needed (e.g. due to opening of a new duty stations, current CLAs quit, etc.), missions can create CLA rosters at the national or regional levels. By evaluating and placing successful candidates on the roster, missions later avoid the need to go through the cumbersome stages of a recruitment process, but are instead able to quickly select from amongst the essentially pre-approved candidates. The roster list could indicate the political, ethnic and linguistic considerations for each candidate to allow the hiring team to swiftly identify the most qualified candidate for the specific duty stations.
- **Hire CLAs on temporary (short-term) contracts:** The duration of a contract depends on operational needs of the mission at the outset of the hiring process. In situations where it is foreseen that the need to move CLAs is likely to arise, missions can justify the issuance of temporary rather than fixed term contracts. Issuing a series of temporary (short-term) contracts would offer less favourable conditions to the CLAs, but retain flexibility for the mission. If explained in advance, CLAs can make an informed decision with regard to accepting such a position.

It is also worth noting that the above options are not mutually exclusive, and managers should consider employing a combination of these depending on the needs they face at different times or in different areas. For instance, CLAs deployed to bases in larger towns, such as regional HQs, that are expected to remain for the foreseeable future could be given fixed term contracts. Meanwhile, CLAs deployed to more remote areas where conditions are fluid and operational needs may require a greater degree of flexibility, CLAs could be hired on temporary (short-term)



contracts. In addition, the most remote areas of deployment, where military bases are temporary and expected to move frequently, CLAs could be deployed on temporary duty assignments (TDY) for up to 3 months with DSA compensation. To further enhance the flexibility of the recruitment and deployment process, a roster of CLAs could be established. Managers are encouraged to consult with mission support as early as possible in this process to identify which options are most appropriate in the specific mission.

- **Irrespective of the option or combination of options a mission chooses, it is imperative to account for the extra workload created by the recruitment and management of CLAs. The above options for enhanced mobility, for instance, all generate significant work for both substantive and administrative components of a mission, which may require additional resources that need to be included in any funding considerations for CLA programmes.**

C. *Training*

In line with their management responsibility in three of the four missions, Civil Affairs is also in charge of training CLAs, both before and during their deployment. Depending on the specific mission context and thus the particular tasks given to CLAs, other sections such as Human Rights, Child Protection, Gender or Public Information need to be involved in the training process to ensure that CLAs are briefed on all key aspects of the mission's work in their area of deployment. Moreover, all missions surveyed have highlighted the importance of training CLAs on writing and communication. The effectiveness of a CLA depends partly on her/his ability to communicate findings and analysis to other mission components, primarily through written reports.

A separate, but equally important, aspect of training needs to be the preparation of CLAs to build a constructive working relationship with the contingent they are embedded with. Chapter 6.2 discusses the issue of collaboration between CLAs and uniformed components in more detail.

- **CLAs require comprehensive pre-deployment training and on-going training throughout their time with the mission, as well as regular debriefs at regional offices (jointly with the relevant uniformed component where possible). As mission mandates and strategies evolve, CLAs need to be kept informed, so as not to undermine their credibility with the local population, or run the risk of CLAs misrepresenting the mission's activities. Training programs for CLAs tend to be more effective if the mission overall has a clear concept and understanding of what is expected from CLAs.**
- **Civil Affairs staff members from mission HQ or regional offices should regularly visit duty stations to which CLAs are deployed to demonstrate interest, support, and further good civil military collaboration and effective information exchange.**

D. *Information flow and verification*

Among the greatest added values of CLAs ranks the ability to provide information on the local context, not only to uniformed components but also to Civil Affairs and the mission as a whole. Information gathered by CLAs has the potential to contribute significantly to the situational awareness of peacekeeping missions and plays a critical role in early warning. Unsurprisingly then, this survey found that many mission components draw heavily on information collected by CLAs, making it necessary to establish reporting and verification mechanisms that ensure the timely and comprehensive transmission of reliable information to the right mission components.

- **In this context, the roll-out of the SAGE event reporting system will provide an opportunity for missions to ensure systematic and rapid access to event-related information acquired by CLAs. Likewise, pilot tests of a mobile reporting tool using standard smartphones are promising, and could even pave the way for real-time reporting by CLAs in the future, as well as a POC Dashboard project for visualization purposes.**

However, merely reporting on events will not suffice to draw the full benefit of the contextual understanding CLAs possess. In the missions surveyed, CLAs currently have dual or even triple reporting lines to uniformed and civilian components (Head of Office and/or Civil Affairs sections). While this arrangement offers the benefit of inclusive reporting and the opportunity to cover substantive issues in detail through the civilian chain, multiple reporting lines create duplication and run the risk of leading to confusion if the same CLA report is interpreted and condensed in different ways.

- In peacekeeping operations with an established CLA concept, CLAs are key interlocutors between missions and local communities, linking the information flow in both directions and effectively assuming the role of a filter between missions and communities. As a result, CLAs can become powerful individuals and much rides on the reliability of their information. Reports by CLAs inform mission strategy and operations, making it necessary to include verification loops in both the military and civilian reporting lines. While verification will to some extent rely on the network of the CLAs, missions need to establish mechanisms that utilize other sources for corroboration. In this context, regular feedback to CLAs on the usefulness of their reporting and their overall performance is an important management task.

Another obstacle for effective reporting has been the lack of IT equipment and access to a steady internet connection for CLAs.

- It is recommended that missions provide CLAs with cell phones and sim cards that have a good signal in the area of deployment, and ensure they can access a computer with internet connection, through the installations of the uniformed component if necessary. Providing solar panels, a personalised USB key for internet connection and other innovative ideas to adapt to the context will prove to be very helpful in boosting the CLAs' performance.

6.2 Collaboration with uniformed personnel



In every mission surveyed, military interlocutors placed a high value on CLAs. At the same time, many of these interlocutors or their civilian colleagues noted that the military personnel was initially skeptical of the concept when proposed but understood the practical importance of CLAs once they were deployed.

Considering the fact that CLAs arguably work more closely with rank-and-file blue helmets than any other civilian staff, the general absence of significant tensions in CLA-military relations is one of the most interesting findings of the survey. At the same time, some challenges have been noted, including:

- Company Commanders may perceive CLAs as a tool of civilian oversight deployed by mission leadership to monitor the work of the military.
- Force intelligence officers may see CLAs as competition for the most accurate and relevant information and obstruct their work.
- Company commanders may block or cut reports to avoid information from reaching mission HQ (this can happen for a variety of reasons).
- Company commanders may regard CLAs as low-ranking personnel and refuse to accept their advice. This may be compounded in situations where female CLAs are deployed.
- CLAs may misinterpret their position and see themselves in a capacity to task soldiers.
- Contingents have occasionally found it difficult to distinguish the roles of Language Assistants and Community Liaison Assistants and consequently used them interchangeably, thus underutilizing CLAs.

- **This pattern suggests that the foundation for good relationships and effective cooperation between CLAs and the military component is a solid understanding of the CLA concept by all parties, but especially military commanders and the CLAs themselves. A lack of this understanding precludes the building of confidence between CLAs and contingents and will likely compromise their collaboration. It is therefore recommended that pre-deployment or induction trainings for military contingents include clarification of the CLA concept.**

Information exchange between CLAs and uniformed personnel is structured differently in across missions, and can even vary between bases in the same mission. While some have standing daily exchanges, others meet on an ad-hoc basis. The ability to exchange information to some extent also depends on whether or not a CLA and the military counterpart share a common language, which needs to be considered during the deployment of CLAs.

- **Research for this survey suggests that it would likely not be of value to deploy CLAs below the level of Company Commander as many troops below this level do not possess sufficient knowledge of English or French.**

That said, it is important to keep in mind that CLAs are only one tool of community engagement and should not replace other forms of local engagement by the military. Pro-active deployment and community engagement outside of military bases remains important for a range of military tasks, particularly those related to the protection of civilians. CLAs can strengthen and supplement contingents' engagement, but should by no means replace their active liaison with the local population where such liaison is possible and advisable.

6.3 Cooperation with humanitarian actors

In their role as civilian capacity embedded with uniformed components, CLAs have also had a positive impact on the cooperation between humanitarian actors and military peacekeepers. During interviews for this survey, members of the United Nations Country Team as well as peacekeeping military commanders confirmed that CLAs are able to act as a link between the two in situations where humanitarian principles would otherwise make coordination difficult.

- **It is important to highlight to the CLA his role in bridging the gap between uniformed components and humanitarians in his area of responsibility. This is particularly valuable in remote areas with a higher degree of interdependence and only a limited presence of civilian peacekeepers.**

6.4 Security

Ensuring the safety and security of its personnel is a core task of every mission. Given the sensitive role of CLAs, they are exposed to a significant amount of risk and require particular security protocols. Threats can emanate from a variety of sources, including armed groups, but also local communities.

The survey found that, as a general rule, CLAs themselves are the most knowledgeable about their security situation. Through their own experiences, CLAs are keenly aware of the realities of violence and generally have a strong understanding of the risks posed to them in areas where they work. A corollary to this finding, however, is that the mission and its security teams must be clear and honest with CLAs about what security support is available.

- **Questions around whether the CLA can seek shelter or medical treatment with the military, will be relocated in the event of a significant crisis, or casevaced in the event of serious injury all need to be addressed, and will depend on their contractual status.**



The first step in mitigating risks to CLAs occurs during the planning and recruitment stage, when careful attention needs to be paid to the CLAs' profile, potentially including factors such as ethnicity, and how that profile fits with a given geographic region. Moving beyond the specified duty station, such as when a CLA accompanies a long-range patrol with the military, may present particular security risks. CLAs might be considered safe in the area of his or her deployment, but as patrols cross into an area of different ethnic or political affiliations, the CLA may be exposed to increased security risks.

- **CLAs should be consulted and receive agency in questions pertaining their own security.**
- **Military contingents, in collaboration with Civil Affairs, the mission's safety and security team and CLAs themselves, need to take all factors into consideration and conduct regular security assessments.**

Certain CLA activities may also create additional security risks if they are undertaken in ways that appear to place the CLA at odds with the community or armed elements in the area. The security of CLAs risks being compromised, for instance, if they are perceived as collecting intelligence for the mission, the government, or another group. Because the actions taken to collect intelligence are often the same as community engagement activities CLAs may be expected to undertake – such as holding informal discussions with local leaders, keeping abreast of local developments, maintaining an awareness of tensions or the potential for conflict (including the movement of armed groups) – the CLAs' security will often hinge upon his or her ability to maintain an impartial image amongst all stakeholders and act in a conflict-sensitive manner. In this context, the close collaboration with military contingents can both be a positive or negative factor.

Another potential source of security risks are the expectations of local communities, which are often unrealistically high when it comes to the mandate and capabilities of a United Nations peacekeeping operation. In areas where CLAs are deployed, communities channel their expectations towards the CLA, who is often their primary focal point for all interactions with the mission. As a result, if local communities are unsatisfied with the actions taken by the mission in response to information shared by community members, there is potential for frustration to boil over and become a security risk for the CLA.

- **Expectation management becomes an important aspect of CLAs' work.**

It is important to keep in mind that security risks for CLAs do not necessarily end with the drawdown of a peacekeeping operation. CLAs who continue to live in the area of deployment after a mission's exit remain known for their previous work and could thus be targets for retaliation.

Lastly, deploying CLAs can also create a security risk for the peacekeeping operations themselves. Since CLAs are hired for their understanding of and connections to local communities, there is a risk that they (intentionally

or unintentionally) share confidential information with armed groups hostile to the mission. While no such incident has been detected so far, missions should consider this possibility and ways to mitigate the risks associated with it.

- **A thorough due diligence during recruitment or determining what level of information CLAs have access to could mitigate risks.**

6.5 Logistics and support



All missions surveyed have struggled to provide CLAs with the necessary logistical and communications support. A shortage of such support, however, impedes the work of CLAs and increases their dependence on the military. The biggest obstacle in this context is the lack of mission-provided means of transportation, which forces CLAs to organize their own transportation or join military patrols in order to carry out their basic duties and convene with colleagues to share lessons learned. Concerning communication equipment, not all CLAs are issued a laptop by

the missions, while cell phones and sim cards are often not available either. In the event a laptop is provided, CLAs still rely on the military for an internet connection. A further challenge raised by CLAs is the lack of office space, which military contingents are normally not able to offer on their bases.

- **Arrangements should be explored that allow for civilian space on military bases, which may be beneficial not only for CLAs, but also for Language Assistants and others (Electoral, DDR, etc.).**

It is important for missions to provide for communications equipment and transportation prior to the deployment of CLAs.

- **Mission support sections need to be consulted on the possibility of transporting CLAs on mission planes for deployment, and leave. Given the cost implications of such support, budgeting for CLA deployment needs to reflect supply related expenses.**
- **Civil Affairs Coordinators at the regional or HQ level should convene a monthly de-briefing with CLAs to ensure exchange on practices, challenges, and success stories. During this meeting, a dedicated time should also be granted to the CLA to accomplish administrative and financial tasks, particularly for those in very remote locations. Mission Support should consider adequate budgeting to fund these activities.**

Annex A: Additional resources

The following resources pertinent to this Survey of Practice are available on the PPDB database:

- MONUSCO CLA Best Practice Review
- MONUSCO CLA Handbook
- DPKO and DFS Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping
- DPKO and DFS Protection of Civilians Implementing Guidelines for Military Components of United Nations Peacekeeping missions
- Joint Protection Team Review

Additional resources such as SOPs/TORs from missions or training materials can be requested from dtko-civilaffairs@un.org.

You can also find other relevant information on the UN Policy and Best Practices Database: <http://ppdb.un.org>

Annex B: Status of CLA deployment across peacekeeping as of December 2015

The status and model of CLA deployment, including administrative, management and reporting arrangements, vary between peacekeeping operations. Whereas MONUSCO over the years has developed an advanced CLA concept, other missions are at a much earlier stage.

MONUSCO

The mission developed and first introduced CLAs in 2010, initially recruiting 49 national staff to be embedded with military contingents in support of the protection of civilians mandate. In response to positive feedback from across components, the mission continuously expanded the program and currently has 194 CLAs across all 66 operational MONUSCO bases and Field Offices in the Eastern regions of the DRC. There are at least two CLAs per base to ensure sufficient coverage and allow for compensatory time off.

Although CLAs are embedded with the military, the Civil Affairs Team is in charge of their recruitment and management. Their hiring and deployment are based on language skills and ethnic considerations with a view to ensuring that CLAs are accepted by the communities that they work with. However, they are usually deployed away from their immediate home environments to mitigate the risk of bias. Once hired, CLAs work through a focal point system at the regional office level, wherein a combination of international UNVs and experienced CLAs oversee their work and act as first point of contact.

As part of their management responsibility, Civil Affairs also conducts the performance evaluation and training of CLAs. Induction training as well as debriefing sessions and refresher trainings involve a range of relevant subjects including Child Protection, Gender and Human Rights to provide CLAs with a comprehensive understanding of their role in support to MONUSCO's mandate in a volatile security environment.

The pool of well-qualified candidates for the role of CLAs is relatively large in the DRC, which is reflected in the quality of the staff recruited. CLAs in MONUSCO typically possess expansive work experience, often in national civil society organisations or international NGOs. CLAs are hired at the GL-5 and GL-6 levels and selected for a specific duty station, although they frequently rotate for a variety of reasons which in turn creates administrative challenges (see below). The recruitment of female CLAs has been a challenge, resulting in only six percent of CLAs currently being women. In response, the mission has established mobile teams of female CLAs in Uvira Area of Responsibility who deploy on short notice to areas where their impact is likely to be greatest.

Information acquired by CLAs is fed into the MONUSCO information management cycle through a dual reporting line to the TCC contingent commander and the Civil Affairs CLA focal point in the regional office. Standard operating procedure requires the contingent commander to clear reports drafted by the CLAs before they are shared with the CLA focal point. Contingent commanders and CLA focal points are required to verify CLA reports to the extent possible before passing them along their respective chains of command for integration, analysis and further dissemination.

In terms of living arrangements, the vast majority of CLAs live on MONUSCO military bases along with TCC contingents. The primary reasons for this arrangement are security considerations, given that CLAs manage sensitive information and need adequate protection. On the military bases, the accommodation of CLAs typically consists of a tent with rudimentary furniture, as well as shared wash room facilities with the contingent.

Equipment and logistical support for CLAs are very basic, meaning they depend on TCCs for internet connection and transportation. The mission provides CLAs with a laptop, a mobile phone and a sim cards for the management of Community Alert Network. The sim cards are supplied with airtime worth \$100 enabling CLAs to communicate with and be reachable to communities.

UNMISS

Following MONUSCO's positive experience with CLAs, UNMISS began to discuss in 2013 the possible deployment of CLAs in South Sudan. In October 2013, Senior mission Leadership endorsed the deployment of 50 Language Assistants to be co-located with the military in priority risk areas. Soon thereafter, however, the outbreak of the crisis changed the mission's priorities and planning for CLAs was put on hold. The concept was resuscitated in 2014, when a decision was made to turn 50 GL-4 level Language Assistant posts into CLA posts. At a Principals Management Meeting the following year, mission Leadership decided to pool CLAs under the Heads of the 10 UNMISS Field Offices, arguing that the CLAs are a mission asset and should be able to support all relevant mission components at field level. The rationale was that the Head of the Field Office is best placed to task them according to the state needs, priorities and resources. From this central position in each state, CLAs support the work of substantive sections as well as the uniformed components on a per-need basis.

The first CLAs deployed in mid-2015, with deployment at 38 CLAs in 10 locations at the GL-4 level (as of February 2016). The recruitment of the remaining six posts is on-going and under the responsibility of the Heads of the Field Offices.

Compared to MONUSCO, ethnic and linguistic considerations in the context of South Sudan's current security environment appear to pose a bigger challenge for CLA recruitment and deployment. The linguistic heterogeneity of South Sudan is such that CLAs often cannot work outside their home areas for lack of command of the dialect or language of local communities. Moreover, in the assessment of many mission staff, the political conflict over the past two years has aggravated ethnic grievances to an extent that makes it difficult for national staff to be accepted by communities other than their own. In combination, these aspects limit the flexibility of CLAs in South Sudan and complicate selection and deployment.

Regarding training, CLAs receive a thorough security training before deployment, induction training at their duty station, as well as on-going training or mentoring on issues such as report writing, HIV & AIDS, communications skills, performance management etc., depending on needs of the individual CLA and available training schemes.

Information gathered by CLAs is shared in daily reports, which go through the Team Leader of the section the CLAs provided support to on that day to the Field Integrated Operations Centre (in the Office of the Head of the Field Office). In some locations, the CLAs send an additional weekly report to the Head of the Field Office.

There are currently 22 military bases (ten military bases collocated with the Field Offices, five County Operating Bases, two Forward Operating Bases and five Temporary Operating Bases) in South Sudan, fewer than in comparable missions. To ensure the mission's presence in hard-to-reach areas of strategic significance, UNMISS early in its life cycle established a number of County Support Bases (CSBs), which house small number of civilian staff and in some areas are collocated with military County Operating Bases (COBs). The CSBs, however, proved expensive and UNMISS recently began to draw down a number of these bases, thus reducing the civilian presence in many parts of South Sudan. This, in turn, limits the mission's ability to engage with communities in those areas and places a greater emphasis on the need for regular long range patrols by

peacekeepers. Given language and cultural barriers for UNMISS military contingents, CLAs will play an important role for the success of these patrols and can offer a cost effective alternative to CSBs.

CLAs generally live in the local communities, with the exception of the Field Offices in Malakal and Bentiu, where due to the security situation the CLAs live inside the camp. All CLAs have been provided, or in some cases are in the process of being provided, with office space in the Office of the Head of Field Office. All CLAs have been given laptops, tetra radios and access to landline phone. As the mission is short on mobile phones, distribution of phones is currently postponed until mobile phones become available mission-wide.

MINUSCA

During 2015, MINUSCA deployed a total of 52 CLAs, where 48 are at the GL-5 level, with a further four hired as GL-6. To manage this substantial number of staff, a dedicated management capacity was installed in the Civil Affairs Team. CLAs at the GL-6 level sit in regional offices and in Bangui to coordinate the operational, administrative and logistical aspects related to the work of CLAs in the field.

Following conclusion of the ongoing recruitment drive, CLAs will be working with the military in 35 out of MINUSCA's total of 39 Permanent Operating Bases (as per current CONOPS). To cover the 35 bases, 26 CLAs work in teams of two, while 22 work alone. Stakeholders have indicated a strong preference for CLAs to work in teams of two, which allows for coverage during leave or sick days, but the MINUSCA budget at this point does not provide sufficient resources to meet these requests.

Throughout the MINUSCA area of operations, CLAs live in local communities rather than on the military bases due to administrative regulations; they have, however, offices set up inside the bases. MINUSCA is also initiating a concept that co-locates three CLAs with UNPOL officers in Bangui to work in the city's most challenging districts of the capital. Logistical support for CLAs includes laptops, handheld radios, duty phones, and sim cards with sufficient monthly credit. CLAs mostly rely on uniformed personnel for transportation.

The recruitment process in the Central African Republic has been challenging due to the limited talent pool available. This factor is compounded in certain rural areas, where the large majority of educated individuals have relocated to the capital Bangui. For recruitment purposes in such cases, Civil Affairs has given priority to candidates living in the area, and only as a secondary option hired individuals originally from the area in question. In addition, MINUSCA, like other missions, has found it particularly challenging to establish a gender balance amongst its CLAs, resulting in only 15% of CLAs being women. In this context, close collaboration with the mission's Gender unit has proven beneficial for the identification of qualified female candidates.

Following recruitment, all CLAs undergo a week-long induction training, with additional training opportunities offered throughout their deployment. All relevant substantive sections besides Civil Affairs are involved in the trainings as necessary, with a general emphasis placed on the mission's POC concept, early warning systems, and mediation techniques that will allow CLAs to mitigate tensions in and between communities. Furthermore, regional Civil Affairs Coordinators are expected to convene a retreat with CLAs within their area of responsibility at least once every 2 months to ensure exchange on practices, challenges, and success stories.

Daily findings by CLAs are shared with the mission through a three-pronged reporting line, involving the POB Commander, the Head of Office, and the CLA Focal Point in the regional Civil Affairs Team. Depending on the nature of the alert, all three channels conduct verification of information received and provide feedback to the CLAs on their findings. The CLAs then send the daily reports to all involved, including Coordinators and Reporting Officers in HQ.

MINUSMA

In May and June 2015, MINUSMA recruited 24 CLAs to contribute to the overall work of Civil Affairs and enhance the mission's interaction with communities and local authorities. Originally, CLAs were included in MINUSMA's 2014/15 budget, but the elaboration and agreement on the CLA Terms of Reference, as well as the completion of all MINUSMA bases, took time and delayed their deployment. As of December 2015, a total of 24 CLAs are deployed in 7 out of 14 MINUSMA bases in the northern regions and Mopti.

CLAs are currently deployed alongside the Force in Douenza, Goundam, Ber, Tessalit, Agouelhok, Menaka and Asongo. While the objective is to deploy CLAs to the field, ongoing security and logistical concerns in certain areas mean that a handful of CLAs also remain at the Civil Affairs offices in Mopti, Timbuktu and Bamako (on rotation from Kidal) rather than deploying further into the field. In many of the most remote locations, CLAs are MINUSMA's only full-time civilian presence and central to the mission's ability to collect information on community tensions and conflict dynamics, as well as on security threats.

A priority objective for CLAs is to support/facilitate dialogue at the local level to reinforce social cohesion, as well as to support early warning mechanisms, in particular to monitor and report on communities that face threats and local developments that have the potential to cause instability. In this context CLAs could also contribute to needs assessment mapping in view of Community Violence Reduction programs within the DDR-SSR framework.

Similar to MONUSCO and MINUSCA, Civil Affairs is responsible for the management of CLAs, but coordinates closely with Heads of Offices, as well as with the military component, on operational and programmatic aspects. Before their deployment, CLAs attend a two-day training session focusing primarily on the Civil Affairs mandate and related activities, as well as on security aspects. Further POC-specific training events at the regional offices (Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao) are conducted jointly with the POC Unit for skills reinforcement. Additionally, Civil Affairs is planning to organize regular regional debriefing sessions with the CLAs.