

Policy brief: UNMISS & protection of civilians

Date: 13-10-2014

Contact: Hans Rouw, rouw@paxforpeace.nl



Background

The Dutch Government has decided to continue its contribution to UNMISS. Currently, under extreme circumstances, UNMISS is doing the best it can to protect the IDP's that have fled to its compounds. Still, the situation on many of these compounds remains troublesome and PAX welcomes the Dutch initiative for flooding management in the Protection of Civilians camps. It is clear that in a continuously complicated security and political situation the mission is struggling to find a clear role. A complicating factor seems to be that UNMISS, while supporting state building and being dependent on the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) and the South Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), was never fully accepted by them. This has greatly hampered the ability of UNMISS to deliver and has led to a lack of trust in UNMISS among South Sudanese citizens.

PAX feels that most of all, in order to better align Protection of Civilian (PoC) actions with civilian needs outside PoC camps, UNMISS should redefine PoC strategies based on direct consultations with the people that require protection. This can inform which priorities can and should be addressed, what civilians can and should expect from UNMISS, and how civilians can contribute to security promotion.

Recommendation and actions:

- a) UNMISS should maximize current limited patrol capacity by assessing the needs and capabilities to peacefully resolve local conflicts and support local "champions of change" like church actors, trusted governance actors, chiefs, and other change agents for peace, and facilitate their work by providing transportation and communication support, allowing access to necessary areas, and assisting with other actions that may be identified.
- b) UNMISS should communicate in clear terms what UNMISS can do practically in the near future for each location. This should also include how civilians outside UN bases can access the protection services of UNMISS when in need, and how civilians can report human rights abuse cases as they happen.
- c) UNMISS should keep on gather information necessary for truth finding, but also make use of reports of civil society and report this publically.
- d) UNMISS should regularly gather and analyze information regarding the security and safety of civilians outside UN bases in order to prepare and advise on the displaced civilians returning to their homes.
- e) Ensure that the next Addis agreement recognizes that the views and insights of civilians themselves are indispensable to effectively protect civilians. Civil society initiatives that foster dialogue between communities and protection actors, like the community security meetings being held by the South Sudan Action Network on Small Arms (SSANSA) under the theme "Security is everyone's business", can all be used to gather information on the insights of civilians regarding their security situation.