

2021

EVALUATIVE EXERCISES

A Summary of
Lessons Learned Studies
and Evaluations



DPPA
Preventing Conflict. Sustaining Peace

CONTENTS

Acronyms	3
Introduction	4
Maximizing Complementarity between Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions <i>Lessons Learned Study</i>	5
Religious actors leading political processes: The case of CENCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo <i>Lessons Learned Study</i>	10
Lessons Learned Study on the United Nations Transition in Haiti (2017-2019) <i>Lessons Learned Study</i>	15
The Feasibility and Desirability of an Anonymous Dissent Channel <i>Self-Evaluation</i>	21
Mid-Term Review of the DPPA 2020-2022 Strategic Plan <i>Self-Evaluation</i>	26

ACRONYMS

BINUH	United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti
CENCO	National Episcopal Conference of Congo
CCAs	Common Country Analysis
DOS	Department of Operational Support
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
HNP	Haitian National Police
HQ	Headquarter
MYA	Multi-Year Appeal
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PKOs	Peacekeeping Operations
RMR	Regional Monthly Reviews
SPMs	Special Political Missions
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNMIT	United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) commissions several evaluative exercises, in an effort to foster organizational learning and strengthen the accountability of the Department. Almost all these evaluative exercises are conducted using extra-budgetary funds from DPPA's Multi-Year Appeal.

In 2021, despite the challenges of COVID-19, DPPA conducted a wide range of evaluative exercises—some country-specific, some thematic and some on topical issues that affect the entire peace and security pillar. This report presents a summary of key findings and recommendations emerging from lessons learned studies and self-evaluations assessing the work of DPPA in 2021. Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)-related evaluations, supported by the Peacebuilding Support Office, are published separately on the PBF website.

The key takeaways of this publication offer important lessons that will inform strategic and operational decisions at all levels. DPPA will continue to place strong emphasis on evaluative exercises to help the Department learn and take stock of gaps, along with good practices. Equally important, DPPA will maintain its attention to ensure that there is departmental follow-through on the recommendations of these evaluative exercises.

DPPA hopes to contribute to the body of knowledge on conflict prevention and create dialogue opportunities through the dissemination of this report.

MAXIMIZING COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS AND SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS

A joint lessons learned study commissioned
by the UN Department of Political and
Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the UN
Department of Peace Operations (DPO)

LESSONS LEARNED STUDY

Background

In several places around the world, United Nations special political missions (SPMs) and peacekeeping operations (PKOs) work alongside each other in complex, dynamic and politically volatile conflict situations. To date, very little analysis has documented the internal thinking, decision-making and strategy making around the establishment of UN missions in these contexts. There is, similarly, limited availability of good practices and lessons learned on the effectiveness of mandate implementation under these circumstances.

As the Secretary-General's restructuring of the peace and security pillar brings the backstopping of SPMs and PKOs closer together under a single shared regional political-operational structure, this study aimed to help remedy this deficit by documenting and analyzing UN practice in contexts where peacekeeping operations are established to operate alongside special political missions, or vice versa – so-called *co-deployments*.



United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Joanna Wronecka, with the UNIFIL Force Commander and Head of Mission, Major-General Stefano Del Col, on the occasion of UN Day in Naqoura, south Lebanon. 25 October 2021. Photo by Pasqual Gorris (UN).

This report covers the findings and recommendations of the study's two phases: the first taking stock of good practice and challenges in planning and decision-making on the design, establishment, and strategic management of "co-deployed" special political missions and peacekeeping operations; and the second identifying good practices forging common and integrated political strategies and management practices to enhancing the collective impact and effectiveness of mandate delivery in co-deployment settings.

The study examined these practices through an analysis of the discursive processes that led to the co-deployment and evolution of SPMs and PKOs in four case studies: Cyprus, Lebanon, Sudan/South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)/the Great Lakes Region. Through a detailed analysis of Secretary-General archival documents, mission documents and numerous interviews with current and former UN officials, the study compared and contrasted decisive factors in cooperation between co-deployed missions *prior to* and *during* their life cycles.

Main Findings

More necessary than desirable. The coordination challenges for co-deployed missions are such that, in an ideal world, there are few situations in which the UN would opt to co-deploy two or more missions in a given situation over a single, unified UN presence. Nevertheless, such arrangements become necessary when a mission has already been deployed for some time and conditions on the ground change but, because of its positioning, it is unable to provide the response required by the new conditions. A desire to keep the UN's support to the political track separate from security guarantees in a peace process was often the motivation for a new, parallel mission.

Effective divisions of labour can be forged. Co-deployed missions have established complementary political roles by dividing responsibilities in terms of technical versus higher-level political issues, allowing one of the missions to focus on solving issues outside the public eye while the other engages in higher-profile diplomacy.

Regional engagement is improving, and good practices can be systematized. A strong and explicit role for a special political mission at the regional level provides a good opportunity for co-deployed missions to enhance engagement with regional actors, offer capacity-building and mediation support to regional and sub-regional organizations, and pursue coordinated political strategies within and outside the country simultaneously. An increasingly common practice of basing special envoys within the region, rather than at Headquarters, has been key to this trend and should become the general rule for new envoys.

Working-level coordination capacities and mechanisms backed by clear strategic guidance are necessary. While cohesion at senior mission leadership levels is critical to ensure strategic political coordination between co-deployed missions, dedicated capacities and mechanisms are equally necessary to maintain functional links between the missions. The deployment of liaison officers can serve many such purposes, from information-sharing to administrative coordination.

Joint or coordinated planning and reporting enhance cohesion. Several innovations in strategic planning and reporting have improved cohesion across co-deployed missions. Sharing analysis, planning and even externally facing capacities across missions and, where feasible, co-locating personnel, can help missions undertake these joint internal exercises and dynamically manage workloads at different stages of a peace process or operational cycle.

Clearly articulated support arrangements are key to reducing the transaction costs of cooperation. Where missions rely on one another for administrative and/or operational support, formal agreements and/or direction from Headquarters is necessary to avoid time-consuming piecemeal negotiations over, for example, transportation for liaison officers or recruitment support.

The peace and security reforms offer considerable opportunities to improve effectiveness and mitigate challenges. The establishment of a shared DPPA-DPO operational pillar situates analysis, planning and decision-making on new deployments under a single working-level chain of command, which can be expected to mitigate a number of challenges associated with co-deployments. Similarly, the reforms' push for more coherent regional strategies should strengthen the framework for joined-up planning and decision making by co-deployed mission.

Key recommendations

- 1** Co-deployments should be readily considered when the existing mission's mandate or political positioning puts it in an unfavourable position to play a mediation or facilitation role, or when the addition of a mission with a uniformed component is required to perform new security-related tasks. Once deployed, missions should actively and dynamically coordinate political messages and engagement with the parties through formal and informal inter-mission channels.
- 2** Co-deployments have been most complementary when their mandates and relationships were the product of intentional design. **The UN Secretariat should endeavour to identify the desirability of a division of labor between, for example, the security guarantee and day-**

to-day conflict management provided by a peacekeeping mission and the facilitation of a political bargain by a non-resident special political mission. The Secretariat could encourage the Security Council to consider agenda items related to co-deployed missions jointly, and to request that Secretary-General's reports be submitted as a joint document or simultaneously.

3 In all co-deployment settings, **DPPA-DPO should explicitly prepare a division of political labour between the two missions which should then be reflected in both mission concepts.** The concept should include an understanding of how these two tracks will remain strategically linked and operationally interdependent.

4 **Co-deployed missions should establish formal or informal arrangements to share capacities and resources across the missions.** For example, Spokespersons and other Strategic Communications and Public Information personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations should provide support to both co-deployed missions in developing and publicizing messaging about the missions' respective political roles.

5 **Direct formal information-sharing regimes from the top and move towards joint information-gathering and analysis processes.** The value of information-sharing practices, arrangements for the systematic sharing of mission analysis and reporting should be formally mandated at the outset of a co-deployment. The consolidation of SPM and PKO backstopping functions under the joint regional operational structure, with one **Director overseeing the teams supporting co-deployment missions**, does offer a good opportunity to streamline reporting.

6 As proposed in the Report of the 2021 Review of Integration ¹, **the Secretariat should undertake further steps to overcome behavioural barriers to cross-pillar and, in this case, cross-mission integration and coordination.** These range from efforts to deconstruct siloed organizational identities across the UN system, to fostering more interpersonal relationship across entities.

¹ In 2020, the Executive Committee commissioned a review of integration in the United Nations with the objectives of assessing the extent to which entities are working jointly to maximize impact in complex settings, identifying the challenges to integration, measuring the impact of existing integration tools and reviewing the existing structures that support integration.

RELIGIOUS ACTORS LEADING POLITICAL PROCESSES: THE CASE OF CENCO IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

LESSONS LEARNED STUDY

Background

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has a long history of challenges in establishing itself as a viable democratic post-independence state. This case study focuses on the mediation role played by the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO) in 2016 in response to the political crisis engulfing the country. It was conducted through desk reviews and remote interviews with UN staff and subject matter experts.

Over the years, the Department, through its Mediation Support Unit, has monitored and engaged with national mediators who have contributed to an inclusive and constructive dialogue process. The DRC process, led by CENCO, provides lessons how the UN and its Member States supported religious peacemakers to engage conflict parties and prevented an outbreak of violence in the DRC. Lessons from this collaboration could be replicated in other contexts where peace remains elusive. The immediate cause of 2016 political crisis stemmed from allegations in 2014 that President Joseph



Women attending a dance performance have a moment to laugh together in the Lusenda refugee camp. Democratic Republic of the Congo DRC. 30 November 2015. Photo by Catianne Tijerina (UN Women).

Kabila wanted to amend the constitution to stay in office after the expiration of his second term on 19 December 2016 and the inability of the electoral commission to hold elections on schedule to allow for the country's first peaceful transfer of power. Following deadly protests in January 2015, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged Congolese actors to engage in dialogue to address all election-related matters. When President Kabila's invitation for a dialogue was rejected by the hardline opposition, he turned to the UN for facilitation support. After consulting Congolese stakeholders, the UN determined that the African Union (AU) was better placed to offer such facilitation assistance.

In January 2016, the AU appointed former Togolese Prime Minister Edem Kodjo as facilitator. He led a dialogue in September-October 2016, which benefitted from technical support provided by the DPPA Mediation Support Unit. The opposition, grouped under *Le Rassemblement*, boycotted the dialogue and the Catholic Church pulled out of it, citing ongoing violence during the talks. Since the AU-brokered agreement did not include the main opposition coalition, regional leaders advised Kabila to seek the mediation of CENCO to bring them into a dialogue process.



Monsignor Marcel Utembi, Archbishop of Kisangani and President of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo, addresses the Security Council meeting on the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 21 March 2017. Photo by Rick Bajornas (UN).

CENCO welcomed the offer to lead the dialogue. Talks were held from 5 to 31 December 2016 when an agreement was reached for Kabila to stay in power until the next presidential election and details were to be worked out for the appointment of a new prime minister from the ranks of the opposition.

The UN contributed to the success of the talks and helped prevent an escalation of the crisis. Support to resolving the crisis was guided by Security Council Resolution 2277 (2016) of 30 March 2016, which extended the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and called on the Secretary-General to support credible dialogue for peaceful elections.

Lessons Learned

- 1** In the highly polarized context of the DRC, the good offices of the UN were used in a manner that **acknowledged the lead role of the AU and the mediation role of CENCO**. The comparative advantage of the UN, through its ability to build and sustain an international consensus, enabled it to add value to the process without undermining what was already being undertaken by others.
- 2** Statements from the Secretary-General as well as joint statements with the AU, the EU and La Francophonie, endorsing the AU- and CENCO-led processes, were well-timed and designed to strengthen the engagement vis-à-vis the conflict parties on the ground. This provides a **useful example of how coordination can be used to bring cohesion to UN efforts across the system and with partner multilateral organizations** to support the peacemaking engagements of national mediators.
- 3** **The unique dynamics of each situation requires finding the right combination of mediators to advance a process inclusive of all stakeholders.** In the DRC, religious leaders had the unique ability to engage with grassroots actors and the top leadership in the country, as well as others in between, which enabled them to bring hard-to-reach actors into a constructive dialogue process.
- 4** **Pre-dialogue bilateral consultations with conflict parties can be effective in building trust.** In the DRC, this pre-consultation stage was further strengthened through the request to conflict parties for **written submissions**. Additional multi-stakeholder consultations, as well as the review of submissions from the parties and previous agreements, enabled the mediators to develop a thorough analysis of the conflict, deepened their understanding of the dynamics of the dialogue and thus positioned CENCO to better manage the fears and expectations of the participants.

- 5** The clear statement adopted by the parties at the beginning of the process, on the **normative framework and values of the process, strengthened the hand of the mediation**. CENCO insisted on respect for the Congolese Constitution which helped manage expectations and keep the talks focused, especially as an initial key demand of the opposition was the departure of Kabila. By adopting a normative framework, CENCO was able to broker an agreement and convince the opposition to allow Kabila to remain in power to preserve the stability of the country and the region.
- 6** **The trade-off between efficiency and inclusion can create tensions in peace processes.** The bishops opted for the involvement of a small group of participants, to ease decision-making and to ensure a deal could be reached before their deadline of 31 December 2016. Consequently, there were no formal structures/procedures in place to ensure the meaningful participation of women, youth and other minority groups.

Conclusion

As the nature of conflict changes, and presents new challenges to peacemaking efforts, the field of mediation has had to evolve. There is increasing recognition of the value of mediation efforts at multiple levels, and the importance of multi-track processes. The DRC CENCO case study suggests that this should include ways of providing technical support to national insider mediators, including religious leaders. By these means, the UN, when so requested, can provide strategic support to mediation processes through addressing capacity gaps amongst local mediators, who may lack the expertise to design and facilitate high-level technical mediation processes, but who have other capacities and advantages essential to the overall effectiveness of a process.

The UN can add additional value to processes if it focuses on the comparative advantage it has in key areas, including knowledge and experience sharing and capacity building. When requested, the UN should coordinate diplomatic efforts in support of nationally led processes. In the DRC crisis, the good offices of the SRSG and the spaces created by the UN for regional and international partners to engage contributed to sustaining momentum to resolve the crisis, at least in part because of the strategic manner in which these capacities were utilized.

LESSONS LEARNED STUDY ON THE UNITED NATIONS TRANSITION IN HAITI (2017-2019)²

LESSONS LEARNED STUDY

² This study and summary were drafted by an independent consultant for the UN Transitions Project and does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Department of Peace Operations, UN Development Programme or the Development Coordination Office of the United Nations. It does represent the views of the author and his analysis of 40 stakeholder interviews, shared documentation, and other existing background resources gathered from public and internal sources.

Background

The Security Council decided that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) would be withdrawn on 15 October 2017 and replaced by a leaner and smaller peacekeeping mission. The UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) was set-up as a time-bound and benchmarked operation without a military component, but with a uniformed police component, mandated to strengthen Haiti's rule of law institutions, develop the Haitian National Police (HNP), and promote and protect human rights, while pursuing a phased transition.

During the final year of MINUJUSTH (2018-2019), a series of transformative UN reforms were rolled out, creating a single, integrated peace and security pillar, a global development system composed of a new generation of country teams led by empowered resident coordinators, and a revised management paradigm which aimed to increase decentralization of authority and transparency. UN colleagues in Haiti and at Headquarters had to absorb these profound changes, while continuing to deliver on their mandates and prepare for a complex transition.

On 25 June 2019, the Security Council adopted its resolution 2476, ending MINUJUSTH's mandate on 15 October 2019 and establishing a Special Political Mission. With this resolution, the Security Council ended a 15-year era of UN peacekeeping support, which had been preceded by four other smaller missions from 1996 to 2000. The new United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) was mandated to play a good offices, advisory, and advocacy role at the political level, advising the Government of Haiti on a number of critical tasks. The Council highlighted that an integrated approach between BINUH and the UNCT would be essential towards continuity and the end-goal of a "seamless, successful and responsible transition."

However, the transition occurred alongside limited progress towards peace, security and stability in Haiti and a deterioration in the political context, as the Haitian government, opposition, and society struggled with deep political divides and the challenges of inequality, gang violence, the fragility of public and private institutions, and erosion of the rule of law. The political crisis accelerated during the last few months of 2019, as a wave of civil unrest, protests, and attacks against State security and judicial structures froze much of civil and economic life. The opening of BINUH and closure and liquidation of MINUJUSTH continued amidst these challenges, as did continued efforts to find a political solution to the national impasse.

Findings and Conclusions

The transition from MINUSTAH to MINUJUSTH was informed by a dedicated UN-internal planning process as well as a Strategic Assessment Mission in February 2017, which coincided with the swearing-in of President Jovenel Moïse. The decision by the Security Council reflected a degree of compromise regarding the need for an interim peacekeeping arrangement. It drew on recent history, and in particular awareness of the risk of “leaving too early” as the Council had deployed a series of peacekeeping missions from 1993-2000, yet after 2000, the political situation deteriorated and the 6300-strong Haitian National Police (HNP) collapsed, requiring the establishment of MINUSTAH in 2004.

MINUJUSTH’s design was shaped by the planning assumption that an initial stable political environment would be maintained during the two-year mission and that the Government of Haiti would be able to adopt key reforms based on cooperative relations between the executive and legislative branches.³ However, instability increased once again in July 2018 when a series of protests and clashes between people and State institutions tested the government and raised questions about past corruption and a lack of judicial accountability. This was compounded by an economic shock, triggered by the government’s removal of subsidies which had resulted in increases to the price of gasoline, diesel, and kerosene, and ultimately led to the resignation of Prime Minister Jacques Lafontant. Despite various national dialogue initiatives, the government was not able to advance institutional reforms, and thus many of the benchmarks and the desired-end state presented to the Security Council in March 2018 were far from being realized as the mission ended in 2019.

This was particularly problematic for the growth of the HNP, the primary security institution responsible for managing Haiti’s security threats after departure of MINUJUSTH. International pressures and anxiety about the growing protests shifted attention to maintaining public order and crowd control, away from the larger systemic threat of gang influence throughout the country. The mission’s final report to the Security Council noted that the implementation rate (34.5 percent) of the HNP’s 2017-2021 strategic development plan (SDP) was lower than expected due to the persistent political crisis, the lack of government engagement and donor fatigue. A final financial assessment conducted by the MINUJUSTH Police Component and three experts from the UN Standing Police Capacity revealed that only 2.4 percent had been received of the estimated \$1.2 billion expected to fund the SDP.

³ A/72/560, Para 17, 30 October 2021.



Members of the Mission to Support Justice in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) participate in a ceremony in Port au Prince, marking the UN's transition in Haiti from the large-scale UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to the leaner, smaller peacekeeping mission MINUJUSTH. 17 October 2017. Photo by MINUJUSTH (UN).

The UN's transition planning culminated in the development of a UN Secretary-General Planning Directive on Haiti in July 2019, which brought coherence to the activities that would be required to finalize the transition from MINUJUSTH to its successor mission. The remaining steps of the transition were defined by three phases. During the first phase, DPPA, in close coordination with the Department of Operational Support (DOS), assumed overall leadership for the mission concept and start-up plan, and the establishment of an advance team for BINUH. MINUJUSTH's substantive sections leaned in as needed to ensure "business continuity" in the areas of police, corrections, community violence reduction, human rights, elections, and security. The second start-up phase aimed to achieve initial operational readiness from the first day of BINUH's mandate with the deployment of 60 percent of mission personnel, a target that was reached. In the third and final phase of start-up, BINUH assumed responsibility for operations and established joint mechanisms for integrated activities and coordination with the UN country team.

Recommendations

General Considerations

1. If transition-benchmarking is going to be a continuing request from the Security Council, the Secretariat should try to develop an accountability mechanism between the government and mission to ensure genuine efforts are made to achieve jointly identified goals. Despite its challenges, The Liberia Peacebuilding Plan (of March 2017) would be one recent example of a government-mission transitioning compact.
2. Benchmarks should focus on those issues that the Mission can realistically address before transitioning, and where there is a strong indication of a national commitment to jointly tackle them.
3. In situations of political instability and polarization, invest in public communications in order to articulate how the core concerns of the population will continue to be addressed by the UN's new configuration. Support to civil society and independent journalism can multiply UN efforts but integrating and using mission resources for public polling into reports of the Secretary-General, as was done during the first report of BINUH (S/2020/123), can be effective in engaging with a divided political class.

Strategic Planning, Integration and Joint Analysis

4. The assumption and framing that all mission mandated areas need to shift to the UN country team (UNCT) should be revised and recalibrated to a broader discussion regarding comparative advantages and burden sharing amongst the key donors, effective INGOs, and national actors in country.
5. In transition contexts, in designing a follow-on configuration, utilize the assets of the various in-country UN agencies and their relationships with national stakeholders (governmental and from civil society) in pursuing commonly agreed strategic priorities.
6. Within the final year of transition, consider the deployment of a programme criticality assessment to bring the UN system (Mission and Agencies, Funds and Programmes) together to discuss common risks and what would be acceptable given envisioned security dynamics after the transition.

Human Resources and Operational Support Issues

7. In addition to the regular capacity-building activities for national staff in a transitioning mission context, explore the possibility of job shadowing in the UNCT, public and private institutions, or embedding colleagues in a national government institution or with NGO partners that advance joint priorities. A model similar to the *National Staff Capacity Building Programme*, which was developed by United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) two years before mission closure, could also be considered in future transitions.
8. In the final years of a mission, it might also be beneficial to increase the number of government-provided personnel to be integrated in the missions' operations to train and create a cohort of national employees able to build on the departing mission's activities.

THE FEASIBILITY AND DESIRABILITY OF AN ANONYMOUS DISSENT CHANNEL

And other proposals to promote rich debate,
creative analysis and bold recommendations in DPPA

SELF-EVALUATION

Background

In 2020, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluation recommended the establishment of a “dissent channel” in DPPA for staff to anonymously express different viewpoints on political analysis. Pointing to a “hierarchical, formalistic culture” in DPPA, OIOS suggested that such a channel could help to encourage innovation, bold thinking, and new approaches. DPPA committed to consider the proposal and commissioned this study to examine the dissent channel model, assess its application to DPPA, and consult staff. Should a dissent channel not be appropriate, the study was asked to examine alternative ways to address the evaluation’s findings.



Rosemary A. DiCarlo (right), Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, speaks with a Member State’s representative during the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East. 23 May 2018. Photo by Loey Felipe (UN).

Lessons Learned

1 The study finds that a **dissent channel would not be responsive to the challenges identified by OIOS**, nor would it be well-suited to the structure and work of the Department. Of the organizations surveyed, only the US State Department maintains a formal confidential (not anonymous) internal procedure for receiving and responding to “non-routine” and “serious” messages from personnel wishing to register opposition to a policy position. The channel has occasionally resulted in policy changes and is seen by many as critical to intellectual integrity and morale in the Department. However, leaked dissent messages have repeatedly caused political damage and, despite protections against reprisals, are considered a dangerous career move. It was therefore viewed skeptically by most DPPA staff. As the model is designed to be used to dissent to major policy positions, a dissent channel in the UN Secretariat would be more appropriately located in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) and serve as a means of disagreeing with policy decisions taken at the highest levels of the Organization.

2 In this light, **the study probed the challenges found by OIOS with a view to identifying more appropriate actions to address them**. Isolating the question of internal analytical and communications practices from other, related but broader frustrations with the Organization, it identified four interlinked causes: a) a culture of self-censorship and analytical orthodoxy; b) a lack of opportunities for in-depth analysis and underuse of mechanisms to convey more comprehensive and creative analysis to senior management; c) a systemic time crunch that deprioritizes lower-profile conflict prevention files; and, d) limited interface between, and debate among, different levels of the hierarchy.

3 The findings point to five key areas in which tangible and politically feasible action could be taken to encourage richer analysis and debate in the Department:

- **First**, trigger points could be identified and formalized to invoke periodic deeper analysis on country files, with a focus on UN entry points. This could include a system of prioritization within regional divisions and sequencing with other UN analytical processes, such as Common Country Analysis (CCAs) and Regional Monthly Reviews (RMRs). Analysis could be enhanced by systematically employing “Red Teams” or other sources of external analysis and critique to challenges assumptions, mitigate cognitive bias and hedge against orthodoxies.

- **Second**, DPPA could adjust its understandings of the purpose of one-page notes in the country-based analytical and decision-making process, using them within the context of above-mentioned periodic, longer-form, strategic analyses. Still these notes could be reformatted to stimulate more debate and mitigate self-censorship at all levels, including by submitting multiple options for action and using “split notes” to highlight competing perspectives to draw senior management into the debate.
- **Third**, regional directors could be held more accountable for fostering active debate within their divisions, building on several good practices already in place in some divisions. Regular discussions of country, regional and thematic issues, in which there is a “safe space” to present new and bold ideas, would help to build a culture of creativity in the Department.
- **Fourth**, desk officers’ and team leaders’ exposure to senior management could be increased. The Deputies Committee pre- and post-briefings are a gold standard in this regard but, more simply, desk officers could, as a rule, be invited to participate in all meetings on their files unless confidentiality or diplomatic considerations dictate otherwise. Recent practices of cycling desk officers through the offices of the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) or Under-Secretary General (USG) have also served to increase exposure to the EOSG and UN-wide processes.
- **Fifth**, formally empowering staff to act on lower-profile conflict prevention files would help to mitigate the tendency for these files to be continuously deprioritized in favor of urgent, high-profile crises. Doing so will be necessary for the Department to fully execute its global conflict prevention mandate and would allow it to more fully capitalize on areas in which the UN may have more space to act using some of its most effective tools.

Key recommendations

- 1** A dissent channel would not address the challenges identified in the OIOS evaluation, is not conducive to the Department’s structure, and should thus not be pursued.
- 2** Periodically conduct in-depth, strategic analysis on country and regional files according to an annual prioritization process, to be reflected in the DPPA Strategic Plan and regional division annual work plans. **Systematically engage “Red Teams” to debate and improve strategic analysis.**

- 3 Adjust internal communications processes to treat both short-term and strategic analysis more appropriately** by periodically submitting long-form strategic analyses (under cover of a summary note), followed by a dedicated discussion with senior management. Embrace the practice of submitting multiple options for actions and “split notes” to the ASGs or USG, highlighting active debates in the Department.
- 4 Convene regional division staff meetings on substantive topics at least once a month**, inviting other divisions as required.
- 5 Increase interface between desk officers and team leaders and senior departmental leadership**, including pre- and post-briefings, the systematic inclusion of desk officers in meetings on their files, and through voluntary rotations into USG/ASG front offices when possible.
- 6 Hold internal consultations** and provide guidance on types of activities that can be taken on non-crisis conflict prevention files **at different levels of the hierarchy** to ensure these files are not systematically deprioritized.

MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE DPPA 2020-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

SELF-EVALUATION

Below is a summary of the report. [Please visit our website to access the full report.](#)

Background

DPPA's 2020-2022 Strategic Plan defines the objectives on the Department, guides the department towards a more effective, coherent, and efficient use of resources, while also equipping DPPA with the tools to measure and communicate the impact of its work. DPPA's multi-year Strategic Plan serves as one of the main starting points for planning in the Department, and is accompanied by a Results Framework, DPPA's key monitoring and reporting tool. The Strategic Plan derives its overall objective from the General Assembly-approved Strategic Framework, which responds to long-lasting, over-arching mandates given by the Member States. The Strategic Plan translates these legislative mandates into specific priorities and outlines how DPPA leverages its resources and partnerships to deliver gender-sensitive and inclusive results.

DPPA's 2020-2022 Strategic Plan has been implemented during an unprecedented time, where the global peace and security landscape remains at a volatile juncture and the world has been shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ongoing conflicts are becoming more complex and new risks are emerging, from the impact of climate change to the spread of hate speech, disinformation, pushback against human rights, including women's rights, and misuse of digital technologies.

In 2021, DPPA undertook an independent Mid-Term Review to assess the progress made by the Department in the first 17 months of its 2020-2022 Strategic Plan and how well DPPA's strategic planning tools have served the Department during the pandemic. 2020-2022 Strategic Plan was DPPA's first Strategic Plan following the restructuring of the peace and security pillar. Conducting a Mid-Term Review half-way through the implementation period enabled the Department to gain a view of progress to date, and to identify scope for adaptation in the second half of the strategy period. The review provided concrete recommendations for improvements to both implementation and results reporting, while factoring in changes in operating context due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The supporting research and analysis for the review was conducted in June and July of 2021, relying primarily on review of documents and publications supplied by DPPA, interviews with senior DPPA staff from all divisions, targeted additional document requests, and consultations with key external stakeholders.

Main findings

- 1 The review highlighted how the unchecked spread of COVID-19 in 2020-2021 exacerbated the instability caused by armed conflicts, terrorism, natural disasters, displaced populations, political crises, increasing technological disruption, along with climate and environmental change. Furthermore, in 2020, **the COVID-19 pandemic global outbreak coincided with constraints on the UN's funding position due to delays in regular budget contributions by some Member States**, which created a liquidity shortfall and consequently, prevented the Department from filling a number of critical vacant positions.
- 2 Based on the evidence of the Mid-Term Review of the 2020-2022 Strategy, **DPPA was assessed to have performed soundly in the implementation of its strategic goals**, from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2021. The Department met or exceeded more than 79 per cent of its own performance measures under the Strategic Plan for 2020.
- 3 The **constraints faced by DPPA were met by the Department, partially, thanks to Member States' voluntary contributions to DPPA's Multi-Year Appeal fund (MYA)**. The \$35.9 million Member States provided against a request of \$40 million in 2020, allowed the Department to continue advancing its conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding work.
- 4 **DPPA's rapid and flexible risk-response model provided a valuable means to manage the threat to global peace and security posed by the COVID-19 pandemic**. Identifying the potential for COVID-19 to exacerbate conflict patterns, DPPA supported the analysis and response of over 30 SPMs and 100+ UN Country Teams, assessing the impact of COVID-19 on conflict dynamics, and proposing actions to foster peacemaking and prevent violence in the context of the pandemic.
- 5 Despite DPPA's efforts, the endorsement of over 180 Member States, and of a broad range of regional and civil society organizations, **the lack of tangible support from actors, with influence over conflict parties, prevented the Secretary-General's 23 March 2020 appeal for a global ceasefire from reaching its full potential**.
- 6 In 2020-2021, DPPA's response to COVID-19 included the rapid and flexible work of the **Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)**, which **had to make adjustments to nearly half of all ongoing PBF-funded programmes, mitigating risks of violent conflict amplified by the pandemic**, including countering hate speech and disinformation, addressing social cohesion, and helping to ensure equitable access to health care.

- 7** DPPA recognized the impact of COVID-19 on the most at-risk members of conflict-affected populations, particularly women and girls, and continued to push for implementation of the **Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS)**, including through gender-responsive analysis, targeted efforts to support women’s meaningful participation and to address conflict related sexual violence, and dedicated funding for gender programming.
- 8** **DPPA adapted its working methods** in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, **re-allocating resources and putting into practice pre-existing efforts promoting the safe use of digital technologies for conflict prevention and resolution**. The Department encouraged innovative approaches across its work, including shifting meetings of the Security Council and its subsidiary organs from solely in-person to fully virtual format. DPPA also pivoted to offer many of its training and learning opportunities online.
- 9** DPPA **launched flexible and timely risk-responsive initiatives, including a total of 188 deployments of teams or individual experts in response to requests**. DPPA and its SPMs designed and implemented new hybrid models of mediation, combining in-person and digital interactions, as well as other tools such as digital focus groups powered by Artificial-Intelligence software.
- 10** **Some of the virtual practices now embedded in the work of the Department are likely to be continued after the pandemic subsides**, while other aspects of DPPA’s mandate are likely to depend on in-person engagement with counterparts and should not be moved to a purely virtual format.



DPPA's Innovation Cell's infographic. Analyzing what people are saying on social helps DPPA identify patterns of social mobilization, diplomatic rhetoric and content that shapes the public's views of ongoing political processes.

Key recommendations

- 1** DPPA should consider developing a **more operationally focused Theory of Change** for its next strategy cycle, better reflecting the process through which DPPA identifies risks of conflict, reaches relevant actors and networks, engages them in dialogue, and exerts influence for peace.
- 2** Additional benefit might be gained **by DPPA systematically covering additional categories of organizational risk** and directing attention to the most significant identified risk factors.
- 3** DPPA should consider providing a one-page 'dashboard' view of its performance against **strategic goals**, combining both qualitative and quantitative assessments, while avoiding the temptation to reduce all of the Department's work to mere numbers.
- 4** DPPA should improve on the **relevance of indicators** where feasible, focusing attention on DPPA's impact on the ground.

- 5** Given the significance of interim results such as **trusted access and engagement with the right actors**, DPPA should examine whether it might be possible to report on the value of these hidden achievements in an aggregated and de-identified manner, without jeopardizing peace operations.
- 6** To counter the natural tendency towards activity reporting, **DPPA might consider requiring divisions to introduce each section of their results' reports with a headline statement and two-line summary**, to draw attention to the most valuable result generated, or the most significant risks identified and managed, and why this work was significant.
- 7** DPPA should consider whether it is possible to **provide a summary overview of the annual financial resources available to DPPA in its peacemaking, peacebuilding and conflict prevention mission**, including regular budget and extra-budgetary funding, and noting those resources that fall outside DPPA's Strategic Plan.
- 8** **DPPA should focus financial reporting under the MYA** on value creation and 'return on investment', rather than the rate of expenditure of allocated funds.
- 9** **DPPA should consider whether it can report a summary view of the cost/benefit provided by the conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding work of SPMs managed by the Department.** An aggregated one-stop view of SPM achievements in accessing, engaging, and influencing relevant actors would help strengthen DPPA's value-for-money claim.
- 10** **DPPA should consider whether support for the UN peace and security pillar might be strengthened** if a holistic view could be provided of the combined resources of SPMs, DPPA, the joint DPPA-UNDP programme, and UN Peacebuilding Fund.



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