

2019

Evaluative Exercises

A Summary of Lessons
Learned Studies and
Evaluations



DPPA

Preventing Conflict. Sustaining Peace

CONTENTS

3 Introduction

EVALUATIVE EXERCISES

**4 The Experience of the International Commission Against
Impunity in Guatemala, CICIG**

Lessons Learned Study

8 DPPA Liaison Presences

Lessons Learned Study

11 UN Engagement in Kenya

Lessons Learned Study

13 United Nations Mission in Colombia

Lessons Learned Study

16 DPA 2016-2019 Strategic Plan

Evaluation

20 UN's Preventive Diplomacy in Gabon and the Gambia

Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

This is the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs's (DPPA) second summary report of its evaluative exercises. As a learning organization, the Department commissions several evaluative exercises—lessons learned studies and evaluations—every year. This report provides key findings and recommendations of evaluative exercises commissioned by the Department in 2019.

Starting last year, the Department began systematically disseminating summaries of all its self-evaluations and lessons learned studies. This was a major milestone in terms of advancing evaluation within the Department. To promote transparency and learning, DPPA is committed to continuing with this good practice of disseminating and using findings from evaluations.

Another major achievement was the creation of a joint DPPA-DPO Peace and Security Pillar Guidance Development and Learning Steering Committee (GDLSC) in 2019 to increase pillar-wide coherence and cooperation on institutional learning and guidance development. For DPPA, the Committee also serves as the governing mechanism to implement the Department's evaluation work. This includes supporting priority-setting for evaluation exercises and monitoring implementation of evaluation recommendations.

At the end of last year, the Department finalized its 2020-2022 Strategic Plan, building on the findings of a mid-term review and an external evaluation of its previous Strategic Plan. DPPA's new Strategic Plan places strong importance on learning and using evaluation findings to maximize organizational effectiveness and delivering results on the ground. The Department will continue to use its evaluative exercises for learning and course corrections and to ensure the optimal use of resources.

The Experience of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, CICIG A Preliminary Exploration

BACKGROUND

At the request of the Guatemalan government, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, CICIG as it is known by its Spanish acronym, was established by a treaty-level agreement between the United Nations (UN) and Guatemala in December 2006. After extensive debate within Guatemala, what began as a Guatemalan civil society initiative against the illegal and clandestine security organizations operating in the country was eventually ratified by Congress in August 2007 and went into effect one month later. Following five consecutive renewals of its initial two-year mandate, CICIG ceased its operations in September 2019. This study aims to distil lessons learned from this unique and groundbreaking rule of law initiative for the United Nations and others engaged in efforts to strengthen the rule of law, diminish impunity and fight corruption.

There are a number of excellent reports and papers that incorporate lessons learned and reflections from CICIG, generally covering its operations through 2015. This study thus puts more emphasis on aspects that have emerged or evolved in the four years between 2015 and 2019, while maintaining a focus on core structural and strategic issues. The study is based on a series of semi-structured interviews with diverse stakeholders that were conducted in the period 1-25 June 2019. In addition, a range of relevant public documents were reviewed, some produced by other researchers and others produced by CICIG and available on its website. Some internal documentation from AD/DPPA was also provided for consultation and background for this study.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 It can be done:** One of the central lessons is that, even in contexts of deeply rooted impunity and historically weak institutions, it is possible for criminal justice institutions to work successfully, to investigate and prosecute even the most complex crimes, committed by people holding power.
- 2 The CICIG model worked in many very important ways:** Several attributes of the CICIG model were crucial for its achievements in fulfillment of the agreement, such as the international character of the Commission; strong, multiple powers to conduct fully independent investigations; the ability to make findings public without having to submit these to prior review or approval by any national body; or the hybrid nature of the body, which placed CICIG within the national legal framework and allowed it to propose reforms.
- 3 Much of CICIG's effectiveness depended on the political will of national authorities:** To a large extent, the success of CICIG hinged on institutional buy-in and committed collaboration and leadership from national justice system authorities, particularly the Attorney General, who was the central counterpart.
- 4 Impunity and the rule of law are as much shaped and bound by issues of power and politics as they are by the capacity of justice system institutions:** The justice system can be a catalyst for change, but alone it cannot resolve structural issues of power. The CICIG experience demonstrated both the great potential and the limitations of a model that depends strongly on the criminal justice system as its main tool of operation while reforms to address systemic and structural state problems remain unimplemented.
- 5 Strategic litigation needs to be accompanied by similarly robust political and communication strategies and capacities:** Deficits in the political and strategic capacities of CICIG were identified as its weakest flanks, leaving it vulnerable to a concerted campaign to close it down, led by powerful sectors most affected by CICIG's actions. Missing were strong mechanisms, internal and/or external, for strategy development, review and adjustment to read and respond effectively to rapidly changing political contexts.
- 6 CICIG made significant contributions to strengthening national justice sector capacities:** Of particular importance was the introduction of technical means of investigation and types of evidence, such as wiretapping, phone records, forensic digital recovery, financial analysis, tax records, or using offers of immunity to witnesses and plea agreements to secure evidence. CICIG also proposed reforms to strengthen the Public Prosecutors Office, which were approved by Congress in 2016.

7 A unipersonal commission confers great powers on the commissioner, but it carries many serious risks as well: While all functioned within the framework of the mandate, in practice each of the three commissioners had strongly different approaches to the work, to the emphasis given to the different objectives and functions defined in the agreement establishing CICIG and to the type of public profile developed.

8 Selection of the commissioner and determining rotations in the position are strategically important decisions and ensuring clear procedures for these matters is necessary: CICIG commissioners were chosen by the Secretary-General, although the name of the person to be selected was communicated to the Government before the official designation. Defining fuller guidelines, including regarding the length or end of a Commissioner's tenure, and criteria for a formal selection process would be helpful.

9 The two-year mandate was insufficient to achieve the objectives of the agreement and the lack of a limit on the number of renewals had adverse implications for planning and stability: In a context of reduced institutional capacity and entrenched illicit networks, two years is insufficient to investigate complex criminal structures. Mandate renewals also tended to be extremely uncertain, in some cases sparked by some new crisis or concerted international pressure.

10 The lack of an external oversight mechanism left each commissioner alone with the powers to make all strategic decisions and made CICIG more vulnerable to attacks. Standard UN procedures, structures and authority for oversight did not apply and could not be enforced on CICIG as a non-UN body. The lack of an established oversight body made it very difficult to appropriately channel complaints or to define an adequate means for resolving disputes.

11 The strong support of the international community was essential, both as donors but especially through concerted political backing: Twenty countries and the European Union provided support to CICIG over the course of its operations and, led by the United States, Sweden, the EU and Canada, they funded the entire operation. In-kind support, generally through the secondment of investigators or security staff by a number of Latin American countries, was an important and novel contribution in lieu of funds. Also, concerted political backing was invaluable, demonstrating a unified position across diverse nations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Similar efforts in future should consider the following recommendations:

- 1** If the focus is on dismantling powerful and entrenched networks involved in state capture and/or high-level corruption, and strong support from international actors is essential, then **strong political and communication capacities, with dedicated teams, must be contemplated** and incorporated as part of the staffing structure from the very beginning.
- 2** **Consistent and concerted efforts to ensure strong relationships with the international community are essential.** Engaging regularly with the diplomatic community to provide information and analysis is key for strengthening the supportive good offices and political role that diplomats can play
- 3** **Consideration should be given to multi-person leadership models**, such as with a commissioner as the overall head and lead on investigative and prosecutorial roles, with two deputies, one potentially focusing on political strategy, relationships and strategic communications, the other on strengthening national capacities.
- 4** The pressures and stresses on the CICIG commissioners showed themselves to be at least as great as those for an SRSG (Special Representative of the Secretary-General)/ head of peace mission, thus, **consideration should be given to using UN best practice on this issue, with heads of mission generally rotated after three years.** This would give predictable lead time for identifying a new commissioner, make for smoother transitions and possibly diminish some of the risks of over-personalization.
- 5** Given the CICIG experience, the length of a mandate for a similar mechanism might best be established as four or five years, with a single extension possible, after a rigorous review and evaluation of results and progress during the first period. This would provide a reasonable timeframe for planning and progress, ensure some objective elements for determining the pertinence of an extension, while establishing the need for a robust transition or exit strategy.
- 6** **Provisions for an oversight mechanism should be included as part of the agreement**, as it can provide for checks and balances, bolster possibilities for a commission's overall success, and strengthen its legitimacy beyond the figure of the commissioner.
- 7** If the UN is involved in the establishment of a future CICIG-like commission, **consideration should be given to doing so through a General Assembly mandate**, as the more robust UN political, operational, legal and oversight support that would be forthcoming would probably outweigh the loss of some degree of autonomy by the commission.

Lessons Learned Study

DPPA Liaison Presences

BACKGROUND

The first Liaison Presence (LP) of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA; now Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, DPPA), the United Nations Liaison Office to the Organization of African Unity (now African Union, AU) in Addis Ababa, was established in 1998. This office was later reorganized in 2010 to become the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU). Since then, the number and size of LPs have grown steadily in recognition of their contributions to implementation of DPA's mandate. Against this backdrop, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs approved a Lessons Learned Study on LPs as part of the Department's 2018 Annual Learning and Evaluation Plan. The objective of the study was to inform the Department's internal learning; provide management with information to improve performance of the LPs; and facilitate advocacy with Member States for their continued support as these LPs rely on extra-budgetary resources for their operations.

The study covers the work of 11 stand-alone LPs from 2016 to 2018, anchored in the three goals of the DPA Strategic Plan 2016-2019. The study identifies good practices, challenges and lessons, and proposes recommendations for the new DPPA based on suggestions from interviewees. It focuses on aspects of relevance for institutional learning and overall management and integrates gender, youth and human rights considerations. It does not assess the individual achievements of the LPs against their stated workplans.

MAIN FINDINGS

- 1** The responsibilities, structures and reporting lines of the LPs vary significantly, with most of their activities and contributions falling under Goal 1 and Goal 2 of DPA's Strategic Plan (2016–2019).
- 2** All LPs perform functions such as monitoring and reporting, supporting conflict prevention, conflict response and resolution and/or sustaining peace, and cooperate with a wide set of UN and external partners.
- 3** While most LPs focus on cooperation with regional organizations or on regional developments, some put more emphasis on country-specific or local developments and work with partners at country-level.
- 4** Despite limited capacities to develop and implement systematic approaches under Goal 3, several LPs have developed good practices regarding organizational effectiveness.
- 5** LPs do not have formal mandates from the Security Council or General Assembly, allowing them flexibility to interpret and adjust their functions. However, they face risks related to unrealistic expectations and heavy workloads due to the broad issues they cover.
- 6** LPs had/have limited integration into DPA, and now DPPA's, internal structures; they are perceived to be temporary and not visible. This poses both substantive and administrative challenges to establishing medium to long-term relationships with partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority setting and substantive support:

- 1** DPPA-Department of Peace Operations (DPO) regional divisions should work with LPs to ensure that their work plans are clearly defined and priorities for reporting and analysis are agreed. Stocktaking discussions between LPs and their respective backstopping regional divisions should take place at least annually to ensure continued alignment of work plans. LPs should systematically mainstream and prioritize gender, youth and human rights considerations in their work plans and in all areas of work.
- 2** DPPA should empower Liaison Officers, notably by raising awareness of their function among high-level UN officials. All parts of DPPA (Offices, Divisions, Special Political Missions) should ensure that information and analysis related to their areas of coverage is shared as appropriate with relevant LPs.



Under-Secretary-General Rosemary A. DiCarlo meeting with Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. UN Photo

- 3 DPPA/Policy and Mediation Division (PMD) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO, which leads on youth, peace and security) should provide substantive guidance, best practice and training support to LPs, including on gender, youth and human rights. DPPA should continue to invite LPs to Heads of Political Affairs Components workshops and/or explore the organization of LP retreats for knowledge sharing, networking and training purposes (possibly with Peace and Development Advisors).

Support to and collaboration with UN partners:

- 4 DPPA should clarify the role and functions of LPs in relation to UN partners (Resident Coordinators, Peace and Development Advisors and others) through streamlined Terms of Reference, recognizing the need for flexibility in response to changing dynamics on the ground. In instances where LPs and Peace and Development Advisors cover the same location, DPPA should discuss their use and utility and ensure that Terms of Reference clearly articulate differences and complementarities in roles and responsibilities.

Administrative support:

- 5 DPPA should explore delegation of authority to LPs on administrative issues, insofar as possible. In the medium-term, as a policy matter, DPPA should explore solutions that address LPs' administrative and operational challenges and the related workload for desk officers supporting the LPs, through Department of Operational Support (DOS) and/or DPPA support. Such discussions should include options for the sustainability of some LPs, addressing staffing needs, including the regularization of posts, as possible, as well as the imperative of reaching gender parity amongst Heads of LPs in line with DPPA strategic objectives.
- 6 DPPA should address the information and knowledge management needs of LPs by undertaking needs assessments and providing technical follow up support.

Lessons Learned Study

UN Engagement in Kenya

BACKGROUND

In Eastern Africa, Kenya is a regional anchor playing key roles in economic, security, and humanitarian affairs. Yet the country also has a history of contested and violent elections, particularly the 2007 elections which resulted in widespread violence and significant loss of life. As a result, and in preparation for the August 2017 general election, the United Nations finalized a UN strategy for Kenya in 2016, and as the situation grew more tense throughout the first half of 2017, mobilized a multi-disciplinary team to be deployed to Kenya in June to support the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) Director-General as the designated political lead on the elections in Kenya. The team was redeployed for the Presidential election which was unexpectedly scheduled in October.

The Department of Political Affairs, now Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, commissioned this lessons learned study to look at four sets of issues that could help inform the UN's future engagement around elections in Kenya and other settings: (1) monitoring, analysis and early warning, (2) work practices to ensure coherence, (3) good offices and public messaging, and (4) regional and international partners. Overall, the findings show that the UN has developed a robust capacity for early warning, which has evolved over time, has its roots firmly in the Human Rights Up Front initiative, and responds to the Secretary General's prevention agenda.

MAIN FINDINGS

The study's findings are based on a desk review of relevant documents and interviews – including several conducted during a trip to Nairobi in September 2018. The study was produced by the DPPA Policy and Mediation Division in close consultation with the Eastern Africa and Electoral Affairs divisions. Although primarily focused on

DPPA mandated areas of work, UN engagement around the 2017 elections in Kenya was commendably integrated, with development, human rights, and peace and security capacities and tools deployed, and humanitarian actors contributing to joint monitoring and analysis. As a result, the study may be of interest to UN entities beyond DPPA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The lessons identified show there is additional room for improvement, and point to four strategic-level recommendations for DPPA to consider:

- 1** DPPA has already significantly scaled up its support to UN integrated monitoring and analysis and should continue building on this progress. For instance, further gains can be made around prioritization, i.e. surge capacity personnel to be released from other duties, and flexibility, i.e. reassignment of staff if required at critical moments. The Department should focus its finite resources on milestone political events such as difficult and challenging elections, and on key UN planning moments such as the preparation of Common Country Analyses (CCAs) – part of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) process.
- 2** DPPA should continue to hone mechanisms to enable the System to move from early warning to early action. Significant progress in this direction has already been made in recent years, but more can be done, including around the Deputies/Executive Committee mechanism, and quick access to Headquarters-level funds to support surge capacity and targeted peacebuilding work when needed.
- 3** DPPA should further refine procedures concerning strategic communications around elections and advocate for dedicated strategic communications capacity to be made available in key settings.
- 4** DPPA should further encourage and invest in generating options and different avenues for quiet diplomacy, particularly in settings where the UN's political space is limited.

Lessons Learned Study

United Nations Mission in Colombia

BACKGROUND

This study was undertaken between April and June 2019 at the initiative of the DPPA/Policy and Mediation Division, with the support of the DPPA-DPO Americas Division and the UN Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC). It captures lessons learned from the UN's involvement in Colombia's tripartite ceasefire mechanism – the Mechanism for Verification and Monitoring (MVM) – as established in the End of Conflict section of the 2016 Peace Agreement. The study examines how the Organization provided a tailored response to the unique demands of a nationally-led peace process through its early involvement in the Sub Commission on the End of Conflict Issues as a part of the peace talks in Havana and the activities of the UN Mission in Colombia (the “Mission”) in supporting the monitoring and verification of the Agreement.

MAIN FINDINGS

There are numerous lessons to be learned from the UN's involvement in the Colombian peace process, including as regards sensitivity in the approach, respect for national ownership, operational flexibility and early engagement that allowed for trust to be built over time and maintained through the presence of a core team throughout the process. Its success was attributed to dedicated personnel and the structure of the MVM, which was particularly suited to the task at hand.

The UN supported the negotiations through the Secretary-General's Delegate to the Sub-Commission on End of Conflict Issues, appointed in July 2015, and his team. During this time, the ground for the UN's involvement was prepared, primarily through the discussion of options that met the Colombian preference for an unarmed Special Political Mission with a light footprint and a narrow mandate. The UN's early involvement in these discussions allowed it to work with the parties on an

acceptable UN role whilst ensuring that important internal considerations, including recruitment, deployment timelines and funding were factored in.

At the same time, the particularities of the Colombian context cannot be ignored. The parties were committed and able to negotiate a comprehensive Peace Agreement that responded to their concerns. Both parties were also fully committed to ensuring the success of the bilateral ceasefire verified with UN support – the key first step in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Furthermore, as a middle-income country, Colombia has national capacity and resources that allowed certain arrangements on cost sharing to help reduce the UN's footprint. Efforts to replicate the UN's success in the Colombian process should therefore be approached carefully and the application of the lessons learned in this exercise should be adapted to the situation at hand.



Arms and ammunition extraction mission in Caleta, Colombia.
Photo/UN Mission in Colombia

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The UN's involvement in the verification of the bilateral ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army, FARC-EP (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo) is an example of how a tailored UN response to the demands of a nationally-led peace process can be successfully implemented.
- 2 An early involvement of the UN in the Havana peace talks' Sub-Committee on End of Conflict issues helped allow for sufficient time to work with the parties on defining the exact role of the UN Mission while ensuring that internal planning procedures could be carried out in a timely manner. The early involvement gave time for a thorough evaluation of the situation, the preparation of operational procedures and the recruitment, training and deployment of the teams. In turn, this allowed the Mission to meet the Agreement's ambitious timelines.
- 3 The tri-partite structure of the MVM allowed for constant communication between the parties and the sharing of operational information that helped in incident avoidance and allowed them to immediately respond in a joint and credible manner when they did occur.
- 4 The joint training given to the national and regional level MVM personnel before the start of its activities was seen as key for building trust and a common purpose. The inclusion of high-level persons as trainers set an example and ensured that their messages carried weight.
- 5 The presence of women police and military observers in the tripartite monitoring mechanism helped to strengthen the mechanism's work, particularly with regard to the monitoring of the gender-related provisions of the ceasefire protocols. In order to increase the number of women observers in peace operations, there needs to be flexibility in terms of requirements on rank and experience.
- 6 The deployment of UN Liaison Officers alongside the MVM was a good complement to the MVM. These teams undertook important information and outreach activities with local actors.

Evaluation

DPA 2016-2019 Strategic Plan

BACKGROUND

In 2019, the Department commissioned an end-of-cycle evaluation to assess DPA's overall contribution to the goals set in its 2016-2019 Strategic Plan and to inform the development of the new DPPA Strategic Plan.

Building on the findings of the mid-term review, this external evaluation was undertaken to fulfill both accountability and learning purposes. The evaluation focused on Headquarters capacities and performance, along with assessing challenges that may have affected the work of the Department. Additionally, the evaluation aimed at providing the Department with guidance relevant to improved formulation of its next strategic plan as a tool for planning, prioritization and accountability. Given the restructuring of the Department in the context of the reform of the UN peace and security pillar, effective 1 January 2019, it was decided that the end-of-cycle evaluation would cover the 2016-18 period.

MAIN FINDINGS

The findings are summarized and grouped according to the three broad goals of the DPA Strategic Plan and two crosscutting issues:

Goal 1: International Peace and Security

The evaluation found that DPA was generally effective in contributing to strengthening international peace and security. Strengths and achievements emanated from the Department's technical expertise, its use of diverse and flexible tools and a growing global presence that facilitated closer relations with national and regional authorities to find common solutions. On the other hand, external constraints such as divisions among Member States on approaches to prevent or manage crises, lack of cohesion in the Security Council and a weakening of the multilateral system contributed to limiting positive outcomes. With regards to backstopping support provided to SPMs, suggested areas for improvement included enhanced administrative backstopping, a need for field experience in the backstopping teams at Headquarters, timely sharing of relevant information and reasonable timelines for requests for information and inputs from the field.

Goal 2: Partnerships

The Department reached out to regional organizations and Member States, in developing its strategic partnerships for conflict prevention and sustaining peace. The Department's partnerships with Member States received mixed reviews, with donors expressing satisfaction with the degree of outreach and engagement and non-donors being less satisfied. The latter felt more could be done to engage with them more regularly, especially

at the senior levels, to seek their knowledge that would benefit the analyses and reporting being undertaken by the Department to intergovernmental bodies and internal executive committees. Within the UN system, the Department had good working relations with key partners. With international financial institutions, the Department focused on building a partnership with the World Bank, with which it undertook joint initiatives in specific country contexts, as well as a global study on inclusive approaches to preventing violent conflict. With civil society, such as specialized networks on electoral assistance and mediation, academia, think tanks as well as with women's groups, the Department sought to diversify and deepen its relationships. However, the depth of those engagements was difficult to measure.

Goal 3: Organizational Effectiveness

Departmental staff uniformly welcomed the focus on knowledge management. However, there was room for improvement to ensure that lessons and best practices were fed back into the planning and strategy development of the Department. Although quite under-resourced for external communication, the Department successfully established a clear identity for itself and was able to articulate its comparative strengths to a wider audience. However, the evaluation found that internal communication needed strengthening, both horizontally and vertically. Regarding human resources, the Department made progress in achieving a gender-balanced work force, however there is room for increasing the geographic diversity of the workforce. The Department could do more to diversify its workforce by bringing

in knowledge and expertise from the regions it was covering. It could also do more to encourage mobility between the field and Headquarters.

Women, Peace and Security

Dedicated resources for gender, peace and security facilitated a more systematic approach to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. For instance, the Department established a dedicated Gender, Peace and Security (GPS) unit to support Headquarters and field staff on WPS issues. Where the Department was the convener or had more direct influence, it successfully advocated for inclusive political processes, and provided gender-related advice and/or gender expert deployments for assistance in mediation, building capacities for conflict prevention, and assessment missions. However, more active measures are needed to reverse the global trend towards decreasing attention to women's concerns in the language of peace agreements and their participation in

negotiating teams and broader political processes.

Strategic Planning

There were mixed reviews of the value provided by the Strategic Plan: some divisions found it a useful reference for developing their annual work plans and for aligning their requests for extra-budgetary funding. Others thought it had limited use for planning as there was no platform for periodic reviews, assessment of outcomes or mid-course corrections. The lack of adequate resources for strategic planning or well-developed functions of planning and evaluation in the Department also contributed to insufficient strategic planning. As a planning tool, the Strategic Plan had limitations. Not only did several strategic objectives overlap but they were aspirational and beyond the control of the Department. This was also a problem for resource prioritization – goals and objectives were so broad in scope that everything the Department did, or was asked to do, was equally important – contributing to the sense of always

being reactive to events and requests, which many respondents cited as a concern. Many departmental staff interviewed expressed their desire to improve planning and the need for planning expertise to support them in developing sensible results frameworks that would reflect meaningful, measurable outcomes. The next planning cycle presents a unique opportunity to develop coherence and robustness in strategic planning for the restructured, integrated Department.



Open Day on Security Council resolution 1325 in Maliana, East Timor.
UN Photo/Martine Perret

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation makes the following six recommendations related to: i) the mandate implementation of the Department, and ii) New DPPA Strategic Plan

Mandate Delivery

- 1** Support bolder, deeper, and more integrated analyses with actionable recommendations that address not only risk factors for conflict, but also promote and sustain peace. Systematic and coordinated outreach to key partners, especially those working on human rights and development, is necessary for improving integrated analysis and joint programming.
- 2** Build meaningful, strategic partnerships with a variety of actors, diversified for both type and geography, that can enrich analysis and strengthen delivery on the ground. Systematic and balanced outreach to Member States, including through personal visits of senior leadership, will contribute to building rapport and trust with all regional groups. The good working relationships with Member States that have been developed by the divisions servicing intergovernmental bodies should be leveraged more optimally.
- 3** Strengthen gender-specific analysis of country and regional contexts. Define clear strategies to address gender equality and the empowerment of women. Articulate measurable outcomes for programmatic

delivery on WPS and ensure monitoring and evaluation of those outcomes.

- 4** Ensure knowledge and best practices regularly inform and guide the planning and implementation of departmental activities. Improve two-way, internal departmental communication, including regular feedback on outputs, to boost staff morale and support knowledge sharing.
- 5** Mechanisms to support field-Headquarters, Secretariat-UN agency and inter-departmental mobility, through staff exchanges, short assignments or other creative options should be not only encouraged but also expected. The Department should advocate for organizational policies and procedures that reward mobility and support career development.

DPPA Strategic Plan

- 6** The next Strategic Plan should set realistic, achievable objectives that can be monitored and measured. It should be a short, simple statement of objectives, with clearly identified resources and partners required to achieve them, towards measurable, interim or long-term mandated outcomes. Identify mitigation strategies to address external factors that constrain performance. The Department should invest in strategic planning capacity and regular independent, monitoring and evaluation.

UN's Preventive Diplomacy in Gabon and the Gambia

BACKGROUND

DPPA conducted a comparative evaluation to assess UN's preventive diplomacy engagements during the electoral crises in Gabon (2016) and The Gambia (2016/17). The evaluation focused on the UN's contribution to reducing the risk of conflict-related violence in both the short and medium terms, following a period where widespread violence was considered an imminent risk.

Drawing on an assessment framework developed by the UN University, the evaluation sought to better understand a) the degree of the UN's contribution to prevention compared with other actors' contributions; b) the nature of the UN's contribution when compared with the outcome of the intervention; c) the sustainability of the intervention; and d) the space in which the UN was able to act given regional dynamics and the strength of norms concerning democratic governance, transparency and rule of law.

MAIN FINDINGS

The UN, which was given much credit for its role in deescalating tensions following the contested election in The Gambia in 2016–2017, benefited from an enabling environment in which the sub-regional organization Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was united in its embrace of norms against non-democratic changes in government – norms that its members decided to defend through a credible and imminent threat of force. Many national actors that played a role in the crisis laud the UN Resident Coordinator for establishing technical support programmes that empowered civil society actors, notably women’s groups, to play a decisive role in the electoral process. Gambian political elites, including President Barrow, similarly credit Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for his role in facilitating the improbably peaceful transition in early 2017. As such, the UN’s reputation in The Gambia is generally positive, though it is criticized in some quarters for having facilitated Jammeh’s departure from power on terms that put him beyond the reach of accountability mechanisms. This positive reputation, in turn, “bought” the UN significant space to influence immediate post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. Yet, residual risks remain, and the UN could have further used

some of that significant clout to reduce future risks of violence and encourage a more inclusive political dialogue across Gambian society.

In the case of Gabon in 2016, the UN’s room for manoeuvre was far more limited, given the relationship of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)’s members both to their own electorates and to the incumbent in Gabon. The fact that the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) is located in Gabon added further complexity to the operating environment. Thus, despite the fact that the UN made considerable efforts to de-escalate post-electoral violence, and that these efforts were considered successful in the short-term, the UN’s reputation has suffered since. The cost of stability, in Gabon, was recognition of the incumbent’s hold on power despite allegations of widespread interference with the elections. The outcome left civil society leaders, including unions and organizations representing youth and women’s rights, almost entirely excluded from the national discourse during and after the crisis. It also left supporters of the consensus opposition candidate feeling betrayed by the UN and therefore less likely to heed the UN’s calls to seek change through institutions and elections, rather than through force, in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Supporters wave The Gambia's national flag as they cheer during the inauguration ceremony for the start of Gambian President Adama Barrow's presidency at the Independence Stadium in Bakau, west of the capital Banjul, on 18 February 2017. SEYLOU / AFP / Getty Images

A comparative analysis of the two cases highlights a number of factors that affected conflict dynamics and influenced the options available to the UN actors, the dilemmas they confronted, and the ways in which they balanced trade-offs between competing risks and priorities. These include issues around appropriate avenues for legal recourse on challenges to the electoral process; the regional and international political and normative environments; dynamics around opposition coalitions before, during and after the crises and; the roles played by social media.

These and other findings lead the study to draw a number of lessons for the development of

preventive diplomacy strategies in future cases, involving similar underlying factors for the management of UN regional political offices and for the ways in which the UN undertakes lessons learning and evaluation activities on its conflict prevention engagements. On this final point, the study recommends the institutionalization of the assessment framework used for this exercise, albeit with a stronger focus on gender, and the practice of employing a hybrid internal/external research team for future exercises of this nature.

The full comparative evaluation report can be found here: <https://i.unu.edu/media/cpr.unu.edu/post/3968/BackfromtheBrink.pdf>



dppa.un.org



twitter.com/UNDPPA



<https://bit.ly/3a7z7ni>