

BEPAC Programme: Project Summary

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This document is a collection of summaries of research projects funded from the Collaborative Humanitarian Protection Research Programme. The programme is a joint project between FCDO and AHRC. The projects are intended to contribute to greater understanding of humanitarian protection risks and more effective protection interventions. The projects were selected after a competitive process managed by AHRC.

The programme is one component of a wider FCDO research programme 'Building the evidence base on the protection of people affected by conflict' (BEPAC). Other components of BEPAC are 'Researching the impact of Attacks on Healthcare' and 'Humanitarian Protection Initiative: Generating Rigorous Evidence for Improved Humanitarian Protection of People Affected by Conflict' and a forthcoming component on 'Beyond Compliance' investigating what promotes restraint and compliance with IHL by armed actors.

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Project review summary: *The effectiveness, mechanisms of change and acceptability of family-focused psycho-social support (FFPSS) for at-risk adolescents in Lebanon*

OVERVIEW

Relevance:

- Context-specific (Lebanon) but the findings highlight the value of a family-system approach in humanitarian responses to child protection concerns in the wider Middle-East and beyond.

Research team:

- American University of Beirut.
- Principal investigator - Tania Bosqui (tb33@aub.edu.lb).
- Co-lead: Felicity Brown (felicity.brown@warchild.nl)

BEPAC priority areas:

- The project responded primarily to area 2 - the impact of protection programming.
- The project focused on testing a 'family-system' intervention as an adjunct to an existing UNICEF-run programme of focused psycho-social support (FPSS) that was already targeting adolescents in communities affected by conflict in Lebanon (Palestinian refugee, Syrian Refugee and Lebanese) that had been identified as at-risk, including in relation to gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence¹.
- The research aimed to explore the extent to which existing FPSS can be enhanced through engaging the wider family/caregivers in understanding and addressing the child's psycho-social needs and well-being, and whether such an approach could be scaled up and replicated more widely across mental health and psycho-social programming for children.

Methodology:

The research team adopted a two-phased approach involving:

Phase 1: development and piloting of the family module as a standalone approach.

- Participatory interviews with beneficiaries and facilitators of existing FPSS programme.
- Systematic review and review of grey literature on family system approaches in humanitarian programming.
- Development of training module for staff of operational partners (War Child Holland, Terre des Hommes -TDH- Italy, Danish Refugee Council - DRC) that will run the adjunct programme.
- Development of the intervention manual and piloting as mock sessions and then with 10 families in Beddawi, Tripoli

¹ The pre-existing UNICEF FPSS was halted for a period during the COVID-19 pandemic so the trial (which formed part of this research) was implemented as a standalone programme.

Phase 2: trial of the family module as an adjunct to UNICEF's existing FPSS.

- The trial was run with beneficiaries who opted into the study randomised to either receive the program or be waitlisted to receive it at the end of the trial in group (multi-family) format.
- Pre, post, and follow-up measures were administered by independent assessors that were blind to which of the two conditions the beneficiaries were enrolled in – to enable a randomised control trial.
- The pilot offered families six 2hr weekly sessions with an individual psycho-social support worker and a booster session a month later. The sessions were divided into 90mins for the whole family and 30 mins with the caregivers. The intervention covered family strengths, roles and goals, joint emotional regulation, communication, problem, and conflict management.
- 351 families participated in the trial over 2 project cycles implemented by 3 partner organisations.
- The trial was also adapted to offer both one-to-one sessions and multi-family sessions to evaluate the cost-benefits of different formats.

Beneficiaries were selected using key criteria including dual-headed households, aged 14-17, identified as 'at-risk', and legal consent/guardian consent provided. Effectiveness of the pilot was measured on criteria including mental health, well-being, protection and parent and family functioning, based on the Paediatric Symptom Checklist, the WHO-5, parenting measure, adversity checklist, and the SCORE.

Partners:

- War Child Holland was the main operational partner, with technical support from UNICEF Country Office in Lebanon
- Implementation of the adjunct program was undertaken by partners WCH, DRC and Terre Des Hommes-Italy in collaboration with UNICEF Lebanon.
- A broader partnership was also developed with the child protection working group in Lebanon, including the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) and its national Psycho-Social Support Committee.

FINDINGS

Summary of findings:

Analysis and synthesis of the project results are still ongoing, but the following preliminary headlines emerged:

- The results of the trial challenged long-standing approaches to psycho-social interventions for conflict-affected children and adolescents, providing evidence that a more holistic, family-focused approach can enhance positive outcomes and has greater reverberating impact for the whole family.
- Those participating in the trial of a family systemic intervention reported greater positive outcomes than the control in relation to managing the risks adolescents faced (including GBV and domestic violence, harmful parenting practices), with the

trial also rated well in terms of feasibility of implementation, high attendance (94.5% retention rate) and good acceptability.

- Related to this, the family system approach was also found to have generated positive outcomes for the mental health of caregivers/parents, since it provided them with the skills to better manage both their child and their own mental health concerns.
- The trial specifically sought to challenge long-standing assumptions about the lack of interest in/relevance of fathers in managing their children's psycho-social well-being. Targeted engagement with fathers, as well as mothers, brought positive results evidenced in both qualitative and quantitative findings – the more fathers participated in the sessions, the more their child's outcomes improved.
- Researchers considered that the findings were enhanced by adaptations made based on feedback, including home practice reminders sent by WhatsApp to caregivers to reinforce the key messages and techniques learned during the face-to-face sessions, encourage home practice, and ensure family members unable to attend the sessions could benefit from the learning.
- The comparison of outcomes reported for one-to-one and multi-family formats indicated that while multi-family formats were slightly less costly, they did not provide the same level of positive outcomes for beneficiaries.

Relevance of findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

Key findings from the pilot for both psycho-social and wider child protection responses are as follows:

- Addressing the wider environment of children and adolescents – i.e., a family or community system approach – can improve their safety and enhance their well-being.
- Designing more holistic and system-focused psycho-social support programmes can also have a broader impact beyond the individual, extending to improvements in the well-being of caregivers/parents.
- A family system approach is optimally implemented as a one-to-one intervention. However, this format requires human and financial resources that may be challenging to obtain and maintain in some contexts.
- Pre-determining family and community roles in relation to who can provide or enhance protection is unhelpful. Local community, social and family dynamics need to be analysed in the initial needs and vulnerability assessment process to inform the design and implementation of protection programmes.

IMPACT

- Because this was designed as a programme-focused project aimed at trialling a new programmatic approach, the project was able to have a real-time impact on operational partners. The partners were able to feed into the development of the trial, their staff were trained on the new family-system approach, and they were supported in making adaptations as the pilot programme was being implemented, to enhance outcomes for beneficiaries.

- Beyond the conclusion of the trial funding, one of the operational partners has continued to implement the programme in Lebanon.
- The findings with recommendations for a wider roll-out have been presented to the national Psycho-Social Support Committee in Lebanon, and a range of regional and global level task forces and coordination mechanisms.
- The project team and operational partners are planning to apply for funding for the training of facilitators to enable scale-up of this programmatic approach to Primary Health Care Centres in Lebanon and to extend the roll-out to Jordan with similar conflict-affected at-risk children and adolescents.

OUTPUTS (received and reviewed)

- Final report to AHRC.

Project review summary: *Challenging neglect from a systemic perspective: child protection in Palestine and Jordan*

OVERVIEW

Relevance:

- Context specific (Middle East) but the findings are relevant for child protection programming approaches globally since they provide a new framing for addressing underlying drivers of neglect.

Research team:

- University of Bath
- Principal Investigator Jason Hart (jh462@bath.ac.uk)

BEPAC priority areas:

- The project primarily responded to priority area 2 – the impact of protection programming. It also had relevance to area 4 – local protection mechanisms – regarding data collected on caregivers’ and children’s responses to child protection concerns. It also had some relevance to area 5 – the impact of legal recognition on protection, specifically in relation to the findings regarding non-Syrian refugees in Jordan (many of whom were not legally registered with the authorities due to host government policy).
- The project explores child protection concerns relating to ‘neglect’ and how this is understood and addressed by different actors including humanitarian actors, direct caregivers (i.e., parents/family) and children themselves.
- Research was undertaken in refugee communities in Jordan (Syrian, Sudanese, Somali and Iraqi refugees) and Palestine (UNRWA-registered Palestinian refugees).
- The prompt for empirical investigation of child neglect in Jordan and Gaza, Palestine was a 2018 desk-based study, [Child neglect in humanitarian settings: literature review and recommendations for strengthening prevention and response](#). This study was commissioned by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

Methodology:

- Working with 38 peer researchers drawn from refugee communities, via local partners, the research was conducted through in-person engagement with five refugee communities – Somali, Sudanese, Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Palestine refugees in Gaza. Total inquiry with 300 people across different communities through:
 - Semi-structured interviews with caregivers and children (12-18 years) (100 interviews in Jordan and the Gaza Strip, and 70 follow-up interviews)
 - Participatory workshops with caregivers and children (12-18 years) (35 children and 40 parents)
 - Theatre-based workshops (30 children) and creative writing and art workshops (60 children) for children (12-18 years)

- Semi-structured interviews with humanitarian professionals.

Partnerships:

- Sawiyah Community for Development (CBO in Jordan)
- Collateral Repair Project (CBO in Jordan)
- Tamer Institute for Community Education (CBO in Gaza).
- Proteknon Foundation for Innovation and Learning (an international consulting group of senior academics and practitioners) was a key strategic partner in the design and implementation of the project.
- Seenaryo (participatory theatre NGO working in Lebanon and Jordan)
- German-Jordanian University.
- Secondary stakeholders were UNRWA (for Palestine refugees in Gaza) and UNHCR for non-Syrian refugees in Jordan.

FINDINGS

Summary of findings:

- The research found differential understandings of neglect and its causes and contributing factors between humanitarian actors and communities, caregivers and children.
- Humanitarian actors tended to understand neglect in relation to the failure of a child's caregivers to protect them from harm.
- In contrast, the experiences of those caregivers and children indicate that neglect often arises from or is compounded by a failure of the humanitarian system to support caregivers' capacities to mitigate the risks children face.
- In Jordan, this was evident in relation to physical, medical, educational, and supervisory neglect wherein – for example - caregivers did not have the financial resources necessary to facilitate a child's access to appropriate medical care or educational services or have access to or influence with police or other authorities to demand they address threats of violence or abuse by other individuals against their child/children. In that context, many caregivers felt that the 'system' (the state authorities, international organisations, schools, health providers etc) did not help them to address these issues. The lack of legal status for non-Syrian refugees in Jordan (following the Jordanian government's policy to halt refugee registration) was highlighted as a particular problem for caregivers in mitigating risks to their children and a contributing factor in neglect.
- In the Gaza Strip, caregivers were generally positive about the support they received in accessing healthcare, and education, specifically in relation to UNRWA's service provision. However, they highlighted the failure of other stakeholders (including de facto authorities, international governments, and the Israeli authorities) to protect children from violence related to recurrent conflict between the Israeli military and Palestinian armed groups.
- In both settings, participants ascribed the lack of support for their child protection efforts to the lack of funding/political support from international donors for

international and local aid organisations seeking to provide them/their children with assistance and services.

Relevance of the findings for the policy and practice of humanitarian actors:

- The findings highlight that child neglect can be caused by failures of the ‘system’, not only the actions of caregivers. They evidence how humanitarian actors (state institutions, humanitarian organisations, etc) can contribute to as well as mitigate the risk of neglect.
- The researchers contend that humanitarian actors can *directly* contribute to neglect through a lack of support for specific groups (e.g. the Jordanian authorities’ suspension of registration of refugees of certain nationalities, the lack of donor funding for refugee responses, Israel’s failure to fulfil its responsibilities as Occupying Power in the Gaza Strip) and/or through failure of humanitarian organisations to engage children and their caregivers in the design and delivery of assistance resulting in a failure to support caregivers and children in addressing the risks and needs that they consider to be priorities.
- The researchers also conclude that humanitarian actors may contribute *indirectly* to child neglect through failing to address the levels of poverty and by complicated bureaucratic procedures which undermine caregivers’ efforts to mitigate risks to their children.
- The findings specifically highlighted refugee parents in Jordan having to take up exploitative employment which subsequently impacted their ability to protect their children from violence and support their access to education and health services.
- And in relation to the Gaza Strip, the researchers conclude that *indirect* contribution to child neglect is related to the inability of humanitarian organisations (e.g., UNRWA) to address the socio-economic and security consequences of Israel’s failure to adhere to its responsibilities as Occupying Power.
- Much of the findings are not new per se – the differential prioritisation of risks by humanitarian actors and caregivers/children is well-known.
- But ‘child neglect’ may offer an additional or new framing for humanitarian actors in regard to child protection risks in emergencies, particularly in helping to understand or connect relevant longer-term socio-economic and other factors underlying acute needs.
- Tactically, this framing is also potentially helpful for engaging duty bearers since it attributes blame for child neglect to the ‘system’, not to any one single service provider or caregiver. This could enable more positive, less defensive dialogue with key protection actors (state authorities, caregivers, service providers) on what efforts are required to strengthen child protection efforts in the short and longer term.
- The findings also reiterate that there remains a very real gap between the rhetoric around more people-centred, or more child-centred, responses and how humanitarian actors, including international humanitarian organisations, working in the child protection field actually engage with children and their caregivers in the design and delivery of programmes that meet their needs and mitigate the risk of neglect.

- The findings highlight the consequences of humanitarian organisations failing to design programmes that take greater account of and better contribute to addressing the underlying socio-economic and other causes of acute needs, namely undermining caregivers' efforts to protect their children.

IMPACT

- The clear focus on collaboration with local partners (CBOs in Jordan and Palestine) throughout the design, research and analysis phases enabled greater buy-in to the findings, as well as a positive experience of partnership by local CBOs (according to the PI).
- This enabled strengthened local capacities for research and greater awareness of neglect as a child protection issue among the local partners (according to the PI).
- International/UN partners initially played a more limited role than the PIs had hoped. This changed in relation to UNRWA later in the project due to a renewed outreach by the PI and staff changes in UNRWA.
- As a result, UNRWA has disseminated the findings internally across all five fields of operation, including a workshop in which the PI was invited to present the findings and support the agency in discussing what they may mean for UNRWA policy and programming. Further follow-up dialogue with the research team has been requested by UNRWA but is on hold due to a lack of funding in both institutions (UNRWA and the University of Bath).

OUTPUTS (received and reviewed)

- Hart, J., M. Alruzzi and C. Procter (2022). Neglect and the protection of refugee children: a report on research in Jordan and the Gaza Strip, Palestine. May. Bath: University of Bath. [full published report]
- From evidence to action: discussion brief on a research project in Jordan and the Gaza Strip, Palestine.
- Research brief – Neglect and the protection of refugee children: summary of a research project in Jordan and the Gaza Strip, Palestine.
- Academic article in publication – Procter, C., K. Pontalti, J. Hart, and M. Alruzzi. Conceptualising and challenging child neglect in humanitarian action: protecting displaced children in Jordan and Palestine. *Child Abuse & Neglect*

Project review summary: *Peacekeepers as soldiers and humanitarians: the impact of contradictory roles and responsibilities on the protection mandate of peacekeepers*

OVERVIEW

Relevance:

- Region-specific (Central and East African) but some relevance for peacekeeping operations more broadly.

Research team:

- University of Durham
- Principal investigator Jutta Bakonyi (jutta.bakonyi@durham.ac.uk)

BEPAC priority areas:

- The project responded to area 3 - the impact of restraint. It may have some relevance for area 4 – the impact of local protection responses but analysis of data collected in that regard had not been conducted by the time of this review, so the information provided was anecdotal at that stage.
- The project focused on exploring protection practices from the perspective of peacekeeping troops with robust mandates, specifically different ranks of soldiers on the ground, comparing that with data on the experiences of the recipients of these protection efforts (civilian populations) to compare their expectations of one another.
- The principal planned output was the integration of the findings into training modules for peacekeeping forces.
- The project focused on African military peacekeepers in two peace operations: MONUSCO (the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC) and AMISOM (the African Union's mission in Somalia).

Methodology:

The research team adopted a largely qualitative approach involving:

- Semi-structured interviews with African peacekeepers, with due regard to gender and rank to ensure a more diverse set of perspectives.
- Semi-structured interviews with civilians in areas where peacekeeping forces are located, conducted by local civil society organisations; and
- Semi-structured interviews with humanitarian actors operating in both contexts.

The approach focused on an 'everyday' experience to understand the perspectives of ordinary, rather than high-ranking military personnel, thereby hopefully providing new perspectives compared to existing research on this theme.

COVID and security-related restrictions meant that the majority of interviews with peacekeepers were conducted online, rather than in person, which limited the use of the 'mapping voice' technique that the team had intended to use. Interviews with civilians and humanitarian actors were in person.

The team encountered a range of problems in accessing the military forces directly with MONUSCO in particular unwilling to allow interviews with serving peacekeepers. The team adjusted by seeking to engage peacekeepers immediately after the conclusion of their deployment, but this was also challenging.

Partnerships with peacekeeping training centres also failed to materialise despite initial exchanges of letters and positive interest expressed during regular communications (in person and online).

Partners:

- Kenyatta University was the main partner (Co-PI, Geoffrey Lugano)
- The civil society partner in DRC was Cercle National De Reflexion sue la Jeunesse (CNRJ)
- The civil society partner in Somalia was the Southwest Livestock Professional Association (Sowelpa).

FINDINGS

Summary of findings:

Data is still being analysed but the following preliminary headlines emerged:

- Peacekeepers have an in-depth understanding of their roles in regard to protecting the civilian populations, based on their existing training.
- However, putting this awareness into practice was described by peacekeepers as having been fraught with challenges.
- They highlighted three key challenges:
 - the limited nature of activities they were largely tasked to undertake (e.g., patrolling), with many interviewees frustrated by the lack of a more proactive approach to prevent, rather than simply respond to, violence against civilians in line with their robust PoC mandates;
 - the difficulty in distinguishing civilians from combatants, which appears to be related to the nature of the armed conflict (asymmetric warfare) but also by a lack of understanding of local contexts and direct access to local populations.
 - a lack of trust between peacekeepers and local communities (in part related to the first two challenges), and peacekeepers and the host countries' national armies.
- Civilian populations interviewed tended to view government forces in both contexts as the main providers of protection, with peacekeeping forces considered only a minor protection actor in Somalia and a party to the conflict and source of risk to local populations in DRC;
- Civilians also viewed peacekeepers (as individuals and collective forces) in both contexts as being motivated by the salaries they were paid to serve, rather than the need to protect civilians.

- In both contexts, civilians indicated that they felt that the peacekeepers should withdraw from their countries, with greater urgency asserted in this regard among civilians interviewed in DRC;
- In both contexts, this anti-peacekeeper sentiment may in part have been fuelled by the lack of sufficient/consistent direct engagement by peacekeepers with residents, but especially by civilians' perspectives (based on their experiences) that peacekeepers do not fulfil their protection responsibilities.
- Soldiers from both peacekeeping forces (but particularly MONUSCO where the anti-peacekeeper sentiment was strongest) were unable to understand why civilians felt this way and were thus ill-prepared to respond to hostility towards them. MONUSCO forces were particularly challenged by demonstrations against them by the civilian population, and by a lack of clarity on how they could/should respond (within their mandates) to violence that was perpetrated during demonstrations. This contributed to a growing lack of trust among peacekeepers in local populations.
- There was greater hostility from civilians towards peacekeepers in DRC than in Somalia based on the long mission in the DRC and the widespread perceptions among civilians that the UN peacekeepers had failed to protect them. Although still critical of AMISOM, civilian interviewees in Somalia were more inclined to acknowledge that the peacekeeping force was a necessary part of the state-building process in their context.
- Data gathered from interviews with humanitarian actors in both contexts echoed some of these concerns from the local population – humanitarians reported that their engagement and even communication from or with peacekeepers was limited and that peacekeepers had a limited understanding of the protection role/contribution of humanitarian organisations.

Relevance of findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

Preliminary recommendations from the project are directed primarily at troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and the international organisations despatching peacekeeping forces. They do however have relevance for humanitarians engaging in advocacy and other work on this theme of protection by peacekeeping forces. Drawing on the team's recommendations set out in the final report, key points of relevance from the perspective of humanitarians are as follows:

- Peacekeepers need to be better prepared for opposition and resistance from the civilian population in areas they are deployed, with background on why this may be the case and provision of different mitigating strategies integrated in pre-deployment training.
- TCCs and Force Commanders need to enable diversification of operationalisation of their protection mandates, enabling consideration of different ways to protect civilians from violence.
- Force commanders need to ensure increased investments in building relations with civilian populations through the duration of the deployments, with the aim of ensuring greater understanding among peacekeepers of the political, social, economic, cultural, and ethnic context in which they are deployed, and with the

aim of countering politicisation of the peacekeeping mission by other parties to the conflict.

- Peacekeepers need to have a greater understanding of and build more effective communications with humanitarian organisations operating in the deployment area to enable appropriate exchange of information pertaining to the protection of civilian populations; and
- Peacekeeping deployments should be understood by the international community as one part of a wider response needed to protect civilians, with greater investment in the concurrent search for diplomatic solutions.

IMPACT

- The project has struggled to achieve the non-academic outputs and thus the impact originally intended.
- Originally, it was intended to use the findings to develop and deliver training to African peacekeeping forces but access to the peacekeeping training centres in the region was not successful (despite repeated attempts by the team and support from FCDO staff in the region). As a result, the team have not, as yet been able to provide inputs to existing training or develop additional training materials based on the findings. The team were also not able to conduct the roundtables they had planned with peacekeepers in either context due to the deteriorating security situation.
- They were able to present findings to the Malawian military, which generated some requests for further collaboration and the discussions also fed into the development of their recommendations.
- Dissemination and engagement more publicly were intentionally limited due to the nature of the research and concerns about potential risks to interviewees.

OUTPUTS (received and reviewed)

- Final report to AHRC.
- Bakonyi, J., A. Flaspoler, G. Lugano and M. Thill (2023). *Performing the protection of civilians mandate: experiences of African Military Peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Federal Republic of Somalia*. Global Policy. June. <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Bakonyi%20-%20Performing%20the%20Protection%20of%20Civilians%20Mandate.pdf>
- Bakonyi, J and A. Flaspoler (pending). 'Governing through affect: the rise of protection as an emotive concept'. Unpublished to date.

Project review summary: *Understanding and addressing the impact of invisibility on conflict-related male sex violence in Syria*

OVERVIEW

Relevance:

- Syria specific but the findings have implications for humanitarian responses to SGBV in terms of global policy and in country-specific programming.

Research team:

- University of Galway
- Principal investigator Edel Hughes (edel.hughes@universityofgalway.ie)
- Co PIs: Mahmoud Aswad (Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights) and Ingrid Elliott (Synergy for Justice)

BEPAC priority areas:

- The project responded to 3 of the sub-themes; 1 – impact of IHL violations, 2 – impact of protection programming and 6 – impact of targeting, with some relevance also for sub-theme 5 – impact of recognition on protection.
- The project focused on identifying the risk factors and demographic characteristics of males targeted for sex violence; identifying the types of sex violence they were subjected to; understanding the impact of such violence and how that impact evolves over time, including how it radiates to others; identifying barriers to disclosure, support and recovery; identifying positive factors that supported recovery and mitigated these impacts; identifying the drivers and layers of invisibility of male sex violence survivors; analysing community and structural stigma of male sex violence within service provision and actors within the protection cluster.
- Country focus: Syria (including Syrian refugees in Jordan and Turkey).

Methodology:

The research team adopted a mixed methods longitudinal approach. This included:

- Analysis of existing medico-legal documentation already gathered by partner organisations – to extract risk factors and demographic characteristics of males reporting sex violence’;
- Qualitative interviews with up to 200 of the individuals whose cases were documented – to discuss their access to support services, their recovery process, and related factors.
- Analysis of case management and referral data.
- Analysis of existing survey data on community knowledge, attitudes and practices relating to survivors of male sex violence.
- Conducting new surveys to follow up on key issues identified; and
- Undertaking qualitative interviews with local physicians on identification of and attitudes towards non-gender conforming men.

Partners:

- Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights (an NGO based in Syria) is the principle operational partner.
- Synergy for Justice (an NGO based in London with researchers globally) provided legal and other case management support.

FINDINGS

Summary of findings:

Data is still being analysed but the following headlines emerge from preliminary analysis:

- The greatest risks were prevalent among young males who were present in areas categorised as ‘opposition areas’, that were engaged in peaceful demonstrations or other forms of peaceful opposition or that had family links to such activities (compared to those engaged in armed opposition activities);
- The acts of sexual violence reported were wide-ranging but the regularity of this kind of violence against males suggested its use was part of a strategy to humiliate and induce fear in the individual.
- Survivors generally didn’t describe what happened to them as sexual violence. Researchers suggested this related in part to a lack of knowledge but also related to entrenched cultural/social norms around ‘acceptable’ sexual behaviours, LGBTQ+, etc.
- The impact of the violence on the individual survivor can be sustained over long periods and can evolve over time, necessitating a range of support services.
- The impact extends beyond the individual survivor, radiating within families and communities, with evidence of impact on the physical health, security and safety, displacement, and economic circumstances of family members.
- The barriers to disclosure (and therefore recovery) are multiple but mainly related to social and cultural norms, including perceptions that men cannot be ‘victims’, pre-existing anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes, etc.
- Once the barriers to disclosure were overcome (e.g., by telling family members or other trusted individuals), the key factors that survivors said supported their resilience/recovery were faith and family, more so than moving away to safer areas or community support etc.
- Male survivors feel abandoned by the state, by communities in some cases but all universally also stated that they felt abandoned by the international community. They described this abandonment as a total lack of accountability for the violence and abuse they had suffered. The research team framed this as ‘ethical loneliness’.

Relevance of findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

Preliminary (but incomplete) analysis suggests that the findings highlight the following:

- The findings recall that humanitarian actors must recognise the prevalence of male sex violence in armed context and better understand the risk and compounding factors within specific contexts.
- Humanitarian actors need to tailor existing SGBV policies and programmes to ensure that they can identify and respond to the needs of male as well as female survivors.

- Programmes intended to support survivors of sex violence (male and female) must be holistic, understanding the wide-ranging *impact on the individual* (physical and mental health, economic/financial, etc) and the *radiating impact* that both female and male sex violence can have on families and communities.
- Humanitarian actors need to understand the barriers to disclosure by male survivors and seek to address them accordingly – i.e., the impact of entrenched stigma around this kind of violence (related to long-standing social/cultural attitudes) combined with the lack of services for survivors results in a cycle wherein survivors don't report incidents or seek support.
- Given the long-term impact on the individual, families and communities, humanitarian support for survivors of sexual violence in armed conflict will need to be more functionally integrated into long-term development and recovery programmes, including through strengthening the capacities of local service providers.
- Human rights and humanitarian actors need to work in a more functionally integrated way to ensure that survivors can access the support they need to secure some form of accountability for the violation of international law that they have been subjected to and to address their immediate and longer-term physical, psychosocial, financial, and other needs. Their longer-term recovery is enhanced by a combination of these areas of support.

IMPACT

- The principal operational partner, LDHR, has already begun training other staff to adopt this longer-term, more holistic approach. Their previous case management approach focused on short-term engagement with survivors expressly to document sex violence for accountability purposes with some limited referrals to support services. The approach adopted under the project and considered much more effective, now is longer-term (engagement every 3 months), with a much greater focus on identifying the wider impact of the violence on the individual, the radiating impact on their families and making referrals to a wider range of support services.
- LDHR has also begun disseminating the findings with other key stakeholders, including the Protection Cluster Coordinator (UNHCR) in Gazientep and the recently established UN Independent Commission on Missing Persons in Syria.
- Further dissemination and engagement are pending the formal publication of the findings by Galway and will require further substantive and (some) financial support.

OUTPUTS (received and reviewed)

- Final report to AHRC.
- Other outputs were planned but not available at the time of review.

Project review summary: *Refugee-host solidary and social cohesion as humanitarian objectives? critical studies of host-inclusive refugee programmes in Kenya and Lebanon*

OVERVIEW

Relevance: Context specific but the contrast of two very different contexts with similar findings in key areas makes the findings relevant for global policy dialogue and programming practices.

Research team:

- Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford
- Principal Investigator Cory Rodgers (cory.rodgers@campion.ox.ac.uk; cory.rodgers@protonmail.com)

BEPAC priority areas:

- The project was designed to respond to areas 2 – the impact of protection programming, 4 - the impact of restraint and 6 – the impact of targeting.
- The project provides a qualitative study of social cohesion programming in two refugee-hosting contexts – Kenya and Lebanon. It explores the conceptual underpinning of social cohesion programmes as an increasingly popular approach in displacement settings, and the extent to which ‘host inclusive’ programming achieves its stated objectives, including reduced intra and inter-community tensions.
- The project is distinct from previous discussions since it looks beyond the economic benefits of social cohesion programming and focuses on the social impacts including community relations, personal interactions, and popular narratives.

Methodology:

- The research team used a mixed methods approach with a focus on qualitative study. This included:
 - Mapping all social cohesion programmes in both contexts to understand the nature and scale of this approach and the related narratives underpinning them.
 - In-depth ethnographic research on eight projects selected from both contexts to assess how social cohesion approaches influence inter-communal and inter-personal relations (using observation and site visits, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with participants/beneficiaries and staff).
 - Assessing the efficacy and accuracy of existing social cohesion research instruments that are used to measure the status of social cohesion between communities, using existing survey instruments in a small-scale

study group and comparing with answers provided by the same individuals in interviews.

- Conducting surveys of one programme/project in each context (a shelter project in Lebanon and a farming project in Kenya) to assess or attempt to measure programme outcomes in relation to stated social cohesion indicators.
- Kenya and Lebanon were selected to enable a comparison of experiences of social cohesion programming in different displacement contexts, e.g., camp, and non-camp settings, formal and non-formal settlements, and urban and more rural areas.

Partners:

- The Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) was the principal operational partner in the project.
- Two international organisations were secondary partners, allowing their programmes to be explored in more depth by the project team².
- Academic partners were the School for Strategic and Development Studies at Maseno University, Kenya and the Issam Fares Institute at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon.

FINDINGS

Summary of findings:

- There are different conceptual understandings of ‘social cohesion’ programming among humanitarian actors and in general these understandings are often vague and loosely defined.
- Social cohesion is often understood as a horizontal relation (between communities) or as a vertical relation (between communities and aid providers) but is rarely considered with attention to both dimensions.
 - For example, the research in Lebanon found that relations between Syrians and Lebanese in one neighbourhood affected by the 2020 Beirut port explosion were tense but there were almost no incidents of violence recorded and there was a sense of solidarity with examples of sharing resources between families/communities. There was anger directed at the institutions that provided aid in the aftermath of the explosion, which different groups perceived as being biased in favour of another group.
- Social cohesion programmes can have benefits in terms of reducing tensions between host and refugee communities but can also create new risks of tension in other areas of interaction.
 - In Kenya for example an in-depth case study of one project (A joint farming project involving refugees and local Turkana residents) found that it improved confidence among refugees that they could engage with Kenyan contacts, and the Turkana participants were less likely to see refugees as a

² The PI requested that these two organisations remain anonymous in this paper due to an agreement with them on confidentiality.

threat. But it also created a new source of tension when local Turkana farmers dropped out during dry periods returning later to find their plots had been reallocated to others with better access to the capital required for dryland farming.

- In Lebanon an in-depth case study of another project (a shelter project that focused on improving perceptions of fairness in aid distribution by adopting an area based, rather than category-based, approach to targeting) found that this approach was relatively effective in improving the perception among beneficiaries of the services provided by the municipal authorities (which was an objective of the project). But the programme also inadvertently resulted in rent rises and forced evictions of some low-income households, especially displaced Syrians.
- Although children and young people are not often considered in peace and conflict reconciliation programming, community tensions can affect their lives, particularly in regard to education. The pilot project implemented by JRS in relation to the findings of the research brought parents from different communities together to discuss the impact of community tensions on their children and resolve or mitigate challenges.
- Existing social cohesion assessment surveys do not always capture an accurate picture of social relations, including tensions. In Kenya, where existing instruments were assessed by the research team, respondents' answers to a closed-question survey were quite different to their responses during an open interview. The research team found that the survey format did not give adequate opportunity to explain the complexity of their views toward other communities, or their relationships with them, such that their responses to closed-ended survey items tended to be more negative than their elaborated explanations.

Relevance of the findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

- A clearer common understanding among humanitarian actors of social cohesion as a concept and as a programme outcome is needed. Currently working to different understandings is likely to be exacerbating rather than minimising risks associated with this kind of approach since it limits learning between organisations.
- A context-specific approach to social cohesion programming is critical to maximise positive impact and to minimise the risks of exacerbating or creating tensions between/within communities. National-level policies need to be tailored to the nuances of local contexts.
- Combining analysis of the vertical *and* the horizontal dimensions of social cohesion in programme design is essential to mitigate perceptions that institutions are distributing aid unfairly or inequitably which in turn can deflect anger towards 'others' in the community. This may include for example working with state actors to ensure a more comprehensive social protection system is in place, instituting more transparent and systematic targeting methodologies and drawing in learning from existing local solidarity mechanisms.
- Children's education can be used as an entry point for peace and reconciliation programming because it is recognised as a common good among different

communities, including those who are divided by inter-community tension. If teachers can access appropriate training and support, they can play an important role in dealing with community conflict.

- Methodologies and tools for assessing the impact of social cohesion programming need to provide opportunities for respondents to frame their answers in their own words, and to refer to their actual experiences rather than generalised perceptions of inter-community relations, to ensure that a more accurate picture of the experiences and perspectives of social cohesion is gained. Perceptions surveys can be important but should be undertaken as part of a package of measurements that should also include more concrete indicators such as the extent of credit sharing or marital ties between communities.

IMPACT

- The collaboration of the project team with operational partners, particularly JRS HQ and country staff, enabled the research to have a real-time impact on JRS, and, albeit to a lesser extent, on the implementing organizations of the two programmes the project reviewed in-depth.
 - In the Kenyan farming programme, data indicating that the current approach could create new sources of tension between some resident and refugee farmers were shared with the implementing organisation, with concrete recommendations on how to ensure more equitable access to the resources needed for dry farming.
 - The preliminary findings in Kenya were used to inform the development of a JRS-run pilot project on school-based reconciliation the results of which also fed into the end of analysis. JRS continues to support the teachers involved in that pilot through their own investment of funds.
 - In Lebanon, the findings were used by JRS to commission a documentary film to challenge stereotypes about community tensions and more broadly build capacities of the JRS team on conflict-sensitive approaches to reconciliation programming.
- Impact is expected to be enhanced by the development of individual short policy briefs by the prospect team for the operational partners whose programmes they reviewed/engaged with though no data was available on actual impact at the time of the review.
- At the strategic level, the findings have been used by JRS to inform their strategic framework on reconciliation programming, with this more conflict-sensitive approach to reconciliation work being rolled out across JRS operations globally. The project findings have already been presented to a range of JRS staff globally (and to JRS partner organisations) through online meetings and briefings, the JRS Reconciliation Unit at HQ is currently focused on strengthening the capacities of their Syria country office using the project findings, with support from the PI, and are lobbying internally for more resources to enable a wider roll-out.

OUTPUTS (as received and reviewed)

- Refugee Studies Centre (2022). 'Special Feature: social cohesion in refugee-hosting contexts'. *Forced Migration Review*. October. University of Oxford: Oxford.

<https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/issue70/Social%20cohesion%20special%20feature%20standalone%20PDF.pdf>

- University of Oxford and JRS (2022). *ECDE-based reconciliation programming in Kakuma, Kenya. End of project report. NOT PUBLIC*
- Rodgers, C., S. Hunt and W. Najdi (2022). *Supporting social cohesion through the Settlement-based approach to assistance. Research Brief. NOT PUBLIC*
- Rodgers, C. and M Talil (2021). *Whether or not Kenya closes its camps, much damage has been done. African Arguments.*

<https://africanarguments.org/2021/04/whether-or-not-kenya-closes-its-camps-much-damage-has-been-done/>

Project review summary: *Data and Displacement: Assessing the practical and ethical implications of targeting humanitarian protection*

OVERVIEW

Relevance:

- Context-specific (Nigeria and South Sudan) but has broader implications for humanitarian action in relation to data practices (not specific to protection programming)

Research team:

- University of Warwick
- Principal Investigator Vicki Squire (v.j.squire@warwick.ac.uk)

BEPAC priority areas:

- The project was designed exclusively to respond to area 6 – the impact of targeting.
- The project explores the ethical and practical implications of a shift to ‘data-driven’ humanitarian action in relation to internally displaced populations (IDPs) in two crisis contexts – Nigeria and South Sudan. Although the initial proposal focused on data in relation to protection programming, the methodology was subsequently changed (based on feedback from the field teams of the operational partner) and the research focused on the use of data in humanitarian response more broadly.

Methodology:

- The research team used a mixed methods approach combining semi-structured interviews with 182 individuals, with dataset analysis and visualisation techniques.
- The research team focused on several key areas:
 - Datafication of the humanitarian sector – semi-structured interviews with humanitarian practitioners, donors, and international data experts
 - Visualisation of the data journey – an analysis and graphic visualisation of datasets from HDX as well as participatory workshops with practitioners in Geneva, regional stakeholders and IDPs in Abuja, Nigeria.
 - IDPs experience and understanding of data collection and management processes - qualitative interviews with IDPs in camps in Nigeria and South Sudan

Partners:

- The principal operational partner was IOM.

FINDINGS

Summary of findings:

- Overall, the research highlighted that humanitarian practitioners are collecting a vast amount of data from beneficiaries but that:
 - collection processes are disjointed/uncoordinated (e.g., the same IDPs asked for similar data from different entities)
 - there remain significant gaps in the data being collected.
 - much of the data that is collected is of poor quality and it is unclear how much of it is used or useable to inform programme decision-making; and
 - the ethical practices on collection, management and use of data are not keeping pace with the speed of the ‘datafication’ process underway in the humanitarian sector.
- *Lack of coordination:*
 - This datafication process is characterised by increased competition – rather than coordination - between practitioners to collect more data which is in large part driven by donor funding patterns and/or donor demands. These demands relate partly to expectations that digital data collection will reduce the risk of corruption and aid diversion.
 - A lack of coordination exists within and across organisations collecting data thereby limiting opportunities to identify trends evidenced by data.
- *Gaps in data collected:*
 - Practitioners are looking for data on predetermined vulnerabilities, with the result that some groups that are not in those pre-determined categories but have other vulnerabilities are being missed. This results in inconsistencies and inequalities in the responses, which may in turn fuel protection risks (e.g. undermine social cohesion).
 - The movement dynamics of camp-based populations (e.g. movement outside the camps daily for work, or longer periods of absence from the camp) are not factored into data collection processes due to a lack of coordination between organisations with the result that individuals are being missed because they were simply absent from the camp at that moment.
 - Gaps also relate to a lack of capacity among data collection staff, due to lack of training on methodologies, lack of language skills to effectively communicate with IDPs, etc.
- *Poor quality data* relates in part to a focus on collecting quantitative data, without complementary qualitative data.
- *Weak ethical practices in data collection and management:*
 - The concept of and policies on data collection and management are being strengthened but the practical application of these policies (particularly in obtaining informed consent) remains very weak with staff often poorly trained/resourced in this area.
 - There appears a generalised failure to effectively inform and engage IDPs in the data collection process in both contexts.
 - Many of the IDPs interviewed in Nigeria were unable to clearly identify who had asked them for their personal data and had little or no knowledge of

what the data was used for, how it was stored or processed, and did not have access to the data once it had been given.

- This has contributed to mistrust among IDPs in other entities seeking their participation in research/assessments.

Relevance of the findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

- The research was not protection-specific, but the findings still have some relevance – related to both data collection processes and how to improve targeting of protection as well as other assistance.
- The traditional ways of working – i.e. with a pre-determined/pre-assumed list of what vulnerabilities to look for in any given context – continue to result in failures to identify all groups/individuals that may need particular protection and/or assistance and result in inequalities in the response.
- There is some positive experience of data-sharing across clusters in South Sudan – this practice needs to be built upon, replicated, and expanded more broadly to ensure that the design and implementation of data collection exercises are coordinated and complementary.
- Coordination among humanitarian entities is critical to mitigate the risks of double counting and/or gaps relating to population movement dynamics.
- Assumptions that IDPs (and other vulnerable groups) have limited interest in/agency for data collection are often inaccurate and thus assessment of interest in and desire to secure data rights relating to the collection of personal data needs to inform data collection processes.
- Weak data literacy among IDP and other vulnerable communities' capacity gaps need to be factored into future design of data collection processes to ensure they are able to participate in a meaningful way, including giving their informed consent to the use of their personal data.
- Such capacity-strengthening efforts will also be critical to mitigate the risk of exacerbating protection risks through poor data collection, and data protection practices.
- Understanding and implementing ethical data practices necessitates long-term investments in staff capacities and awareness in this area.
- More broadly the research also flagged the fundamental and yet unanswered ethical questions about the value of collecting data from affected (often vulnerable) populations without certainty or even likelihood that they will receive protection or assistance as a result.

IMPACT

- Practitioner workshops were organised by IOM and the Warwick team, aimed at exploring the impact of data collection methodologies on the humanitarian sector, to discuss with practitioners how to identify specific risks relating to how data is collected, used, processed, etc.
- IOM is considering how to use the findings to improve internal operational guidance on securing informed consent from affected people, including in their toolkit for the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).

- Workshops were also organised by the University of Ibadan and University of Warwick in collaboration with IDPs and the Borno State Emergency Management Agency in Nigeria, aimed at disseminating the research findings to practitioners and co-produce data literacy tools with IDPs
- Funding is being sought by the project team to undertake further impact work, including further developing training on data literacy for staff from different agencies to use. IOM is trying to secure this through the interagency data responsibility working group.
- Some engagement was undertaken throughout the project with the Camp Coordination Camp Management Cluster (co-led by IOM and UNHCR) to disseminate findings more broadly but any impact is yet limited/undocumented.

OUTPUTS (received and reviewed)

- Final report to AHRC.
- Squire, V., et. al. (2022) *Data and Displacement: Assessing the Practical and Ethical Implications of Data-Driven Humanitarianism for Internally Displaced Persons in Camp-Like Settings*, Final Project Report, www.warwick.ac.uk/datadisplacement
- Fayehun, O. and O. Akanle (2022). *Humanitarian crises and international displaced persons in Nigeria: A situation analysis*. University of Warwick.
- University of Warwick (2022). *Data and displacement Policy Brief: Evidence on the ethics and efficacy of data-driven humanitarian assistance: the case of South Sudan*.
- University of Warwick (2022). *Data and displacement policy brief: Datafication of the humanitarian sector: efficacy and ethics*. November.
<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/projects/internationalrelationssecurity/dataanddisplacement/data-displacement/news/?newsItem=8a1785d88452edf901845d0dca815560>
- Squire, V. and M. Alozie (2023). 'Coloniality and Frictions: Data-driven humanitarianism in north-eastern Nigeria and South Sudan'. *Big Data and Society*. April. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/20539517231163171>
- Fayehun, O., O Akanle, O. Popoola, E. Okewumi, F. Williams, A. Adam, K. Ahajimal and O. Abimbola. (2023). 'Data gathering and utilisation: humanitarian targeting and ethical issues in northeastern Nigeria'. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*. Springer Open. April.
<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/projects/internationalrelationssecurity/dataanddisplacement/data-displacement/news/?newsItem=8a1785d887bcdd4f0187bd9d2af51189>

Project review summary: *From Words to Deeds: Providing tools for an effective engagement of armed non-state actors (ANSAs) to improve humanitarian protection.*

RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Seven case studies across four geographical regions (Middle East and North Africa, Africa (Sahel), Asia and Latin America) were conducted for this research project. The case studies are highly relevant to inform country-specific work (Lebanon, Mali, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Colombia). Generally, the findings outlined below are relevant to inform global policy and practice. A synthesis paper also identifies the main global-level implications for policy and practice.

OVERVIEW

Research team :

- Geneva Academy
- Principal investigator Annyssa Bellal Annyssa.bellal@graduateinstitute.ch

BEPAC priority areas and project focus:

- This project focused on Priority Area 3 on the impact of restraint with a focus on restraint by non-state armed groups. The research focused on the following central research questions:
 - Are ANSAs familiar with their obligations under IHL and how do they understand them? Do ANSAs agree with the norms? What factors influence their policy and practice? Are there new issues that ANSAs would be willing to regulate in the future?

The research team examined five key aspects related to these questions:

- Knowledge and understanding: Are ANSAs familiar with the international rules applicable to them in armed conflicts? Do they have different degrees of knowledge according to the rule under analysis? How do they understand these rules? Do they share the same interpretations states or other ANSAs have?
- Ownership and internalization: Do ANSAs agree with the international rules applicable to them in armed conflict? Are these rules reflected in their internal policies or codes of conduct? What factors contribute to their acceptance or rejection of specific humanitarian norms (e.g. local values, influence of different stakeholders)?
- Capacity: What are the practical challenges ANSAs face in complying with the international rules applicable to them? Are some of these difficulties linked to their organizational structure, the way norms are drafted (e.g. fair trial procedures based on states' infrastructure and capacity), the lack of technical assistance?
- Situational: What are the reasons why ANSAs follow certain rules while, at the same time, disregarding others? What are the situational factors that influence

both scenarios? What conclusions can be drawn from these scenarios of respect or lack thereof?

- Reflective: What are the issues ANSAs would be willing to regulate in the future (e.g. protection of the environment, ban on anti-vehicle mines, etc)? How would they regulate these (e.g. through an agreement with the other parties to conflict, an internal regulation of the group, a social agreement with the civilians living in the territory they control, elaboration of new international norms)?

Seven case studies were conducted across four regions:

- Middle East North Africa: Lebanon
- Africa: Mali
- Asia: Afghanistan, the Philippines
- Latin America: Colombia

The case studies were case studies of armed actors including:

- Al-Qaeda
- The Islamic State Group
- The Hezbollah in Lebanon
- The Taliban in Afghanistan
- The Philippines Moro Islamic Liberation Front/Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (MILF) in the Philippines
- The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) in Mali
- The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP) in Colombia

Methodology:

- The methodology adopted a case study approach with seven case studies of armed actors. The case studies examined the perspectives of ANSAs on the protection of civilians from attacks, use of landmines and other explosive devices, humanitarian access, the prohibition of using and recruiting children in hostilities, the prohibition of forced displacement, the specific protection of certain objects such as cultural property and environment, the deprivation of liberty, the prohibition of sexual violence, the protection of health care with a special focus on the protection of persons with disabilities, the protection of education and fair trial and administration of justice.
- Qualitative interviews with key informants and directly with armed actors were conducted for most case studies. The main exceptions are the case studies on Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State which relied on secondary resources and key informant interviews.
- Document reviews were also conducted for each case study which included existing studies on specific armed actors as well as reviewing documents linked with armed actors’ conduct and commitments such as codes of conduct or deeds of commitment or other types of agreements relating to international norms.

Partnerships:

- Geneva Call
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- Diakonia Global International Law Centre
- American University in Cairo

FINDINGS

Summary of findings:

- The study is unique in analysing what influences and restraints of ANSAs from the perspectives of ANSAs themselves.
- ANSAs have engaged on IHL to various degrees. Some norms seem to be more readily accepted such as norms around health care. Some ANSAs adopt norms that are beyond IHL obligations such as on the protection of children and the use of certain weapons. Some ANSAs have engaged with norms but based on religious and cultural beliefs (Islamic law, Tuareg warrior culture for the MNLA in Mali) rather than international law. References to ANSAs' members' own culture or religion are an incentive not only for adoption but also for respect for the norms by fighters.
- Most ANSAs researched have taken some form of commitment to the norms studied including action plans with the UN, Geneva Calls Deeds of Commitment, unilateral declarations, Memorandum of Understanding, and ceasefire or peace agreements. The majority of ANSAs studied had some form of policies on the protection of civilians and clearly defined categories of people that could not be directly targeted. However, these categories of people do not always match the definition of civilian in IHL and are often not clearly defined. While commitments have been made, many ANSAs violate their own agreed-upon norms mostly as a result of a lack of discipline among the ranks and files as well as the lack of effective command and control or loose/decentralised structures of ANSAs.
- The research outlines that in some cases it has taken years of sustained engagement with an ANSA to reach compliance and restraints.
- The research suggests that policy shifts have been driven in part by political considerations and concern for their reputation (i.e., legitimacy, propaganda). Such considerations and concerns tend to arise at the time of engaging in peace talks or other political opportunities. The research also outlines that greater compliance measures were put in place by ANSAs in response to external pressure or when they began to gain greater territorial control.
- Norm commitments made by ANSAs also impact the willingness of other ANSAs to make commitments.
- Humanitarian engagement with ANSAs and complementary approaches contribute to ANSAs' willingness and ability to commit to norms and restraint. Apart from the lack of capacity and command and control issues, ignoring international standards is an important challenge to compliance with norms. ANSAs have requested during this study to have their capacities built in relation to certain norms. In addition, the imposition of norms is less successful than when ANSAs

are consulted in creating and implementing these norms, reiterating the importance of having a proactive humanitarian engagement with ANSAs.

- There are correlations between the type of ANSAs and their willingness and ability to implement the norms they commit to. Factors include organisational structure, aims, ideology, leadership, external support, and relationship with local communities. The study reiterates the conclusion from the ICRC's study *The Roots of Restraints* on the importance of understanding ANSAs as part of engaging them on norms and restraints.
- While the study tried very hard to identify factors that explain restraint, the research team highlights that there is still more to do to understand what exactly influences restraint, and what types of ANSAs are more susceptible to respect norms and IHL. The research team also highlights the need to approach restraint from a sociological and political perspective/analysis rather than the legal perspective this study adopted.

Relevance of findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

- The case studies provide an in-depth analysis of specific ANSAs. This analysis is highly relevant and useful for those organisations present in these countries and to inform their engagement strategy with ANSAs.
- Beyond the in-depth analysis of the case studies, the comparative study (Research and Policy conclusions) provides some concrete recommendations for policy and practice.
- The main finding with relevance for policy and practice is that engaging armed non-state actors on norms in a sustained and long-term manner is an effective practice for restraint. In that sense, the research debunks the assumptions made by some humanitarian protection actors and donors that engaging ANSAs on norms is not an effective practice as ANSAs due to their nature are assumed not to be interested or able to comply with norms.
- In complement to this main finding, the research highlights the need for humanitarian organisations to more effectively base their engagement with ANSAs on an in-depth understanding of their structures, aims, ideology, leadership, external support and relationship with local communities.
- Finally, the research highlights the need to support ANSAs in implementing their commitments to IHL in particular in terms of internal monitoring and accountability mechanisms and more generally capacity building.
- In brief, the research proposes the following recommendations:
 - Engage and support engagement with ANSAs in a dialogue towards respect for IHL.
 - Train ANSAs on relevant international humanitarian norms.
 - Mobilise actors of influence.
 - Promote inclusion of IHL-related issues during peace processes.
 - Hold ANSAs accountable for their words.
 - Increase assistance to civilians living in areas controlled by ANSAs.

Links to findings in other research projects:

- The findings of this project confirm the findings of the GPPI project in particular that the following interventions have a positive impact on restraint:
 - Training of armed non-state actors on IHL
 - Naming and shaming
 - Mobilising influence

IMPACT

- The project set out to:
 - Increase knowledge and understanding of armed non-state actor's practice and interpretation of international humanitarian norms.
 - Provide practical tools that the sector may use to more effectively engage with armed non-state actors on humanitarian protection.
- Project partners (Geneva Call and NRC) were seen as key audiences of the research. The impact of the research on project partners was limited due to staff turnover in these organisations. As individuals left the partner organisations, it remained unclear what partner organisations took on from the research findings.
- The project also targeted a wider humanitarian sector audience including humanitarian protection organisations, other aid agencies present in conflict settings, academics, policymakers, and donors. While it remains too early to see the impact in terms of changes in practice and policy, the international conference organised in September 2022 in Geneva was a great opportunity to engage with these actors – with 130 people attending - and start a pathway to impact the research findings. The research findings were also shared at a meeting of the Global Protection Cluster attended by 40 NGOs.
- The study is quoted in a recent publication from ICRC on detention and ANSAs showing it is being picked up by key protection organisations (<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/detention-non-state-armed-groups>).
- Bilateral engagement with specific donors including FCDO, and organisations also helped disseminate the research findings opening up a pathway to impact. Policy engagement was more specifically done by the research team with UNICEF and UNHCR.
- The creation and maintenance of a dedicated website to publish the findings of the research will facilitate uptake by practitioners and policymakers. The publication of a synthesis report (Research and Policy conclusion) greatly contributes to the ability of practitioners and policymakers to at the very least find and read up on the research outcomes.

OUTPUTS (as reviewed)

- Bellal, A. Bongard, P. and Heffes E. (2019) Word to Deeds: A research of armed non-state actors' practice and interpretation of international humanitarian and human rights norms. Research Brief. Geneva Academy and Geneva Call.

(<https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/From%20Words%20to%20Deeds%20A%20Research%20of%20Armed%20Non-State%20Actors%E2%80%99%20Practice%20and%20Inter.pdf>)

- Bellal, A. and Bongard, P. (2020) Compliance symposium: Pariah or Stakeholders? Enhancing Compliance with Humanitarian Norms by Including Non-State Armed Groups' Views and Practice. *Opinio Juris*, 23 October 2020. Blog. (<http://opiniojuris.org/2020/10/23/compliance-symposium-pariah-or-stakeholders-enhancing-compliance-with-humanitarian-norms-by-including-non-state-armed-groups-views-and-practice/>)
- Bellal, A. Bongard, P. and Heffes E. (2022) From Words to Deeds A Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms Research and Policy Conclusions. (https://words2deeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Words2Deeds_comparative-study.pdf)
- American University in Cairo (2022) From Words to Deeds: A Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms Al-Qaeda Sept 2022. ((https://words2deeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Al-Qaeda_Case-Study.pdf)
- Bongard, P. (2021) From Words to Deeds: A Research Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad, MNLA), Mali March 2021 (<https://words2deeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Case-Study-MNLA.pdf>)
- Heffes, E. (2021) From Words to Deeds: A Research Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army, FARC-EP) March 2021 (<https://words2deeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Case-Study-Revolutionary-Armed-Forces-of-Colombia-%E2%80%93-Peoples-Army.pdf>)
- Mikhail, H. and Baalbaky, H. (2022) From Words to Deeds: A Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms The Hezbollah - Lebanon Sept 2022. (https://words2deeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Hezbollah_Case-Study.pdf)
- American University in Cairo (2022) From Words to Deeds: A Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms The Islamic State Group Sept 2022. (https://words2deeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ISG_Case-Study.pdf)
- Rush, C. (2022) From Words to Deeds: A Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms The Philippines Moro Islamic Liberation Front/Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (August 2022). (https://words2deeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/MILF_Case-Study.pdf)

- Jackson, A. and Amiri, R. (2022) From Words to Deeds: A Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms The Taliban-Afghanistan June 2022. (https://words2deeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Taliban_Case-Study.pdf)

Project review summary: *Protection civilians from harm: how humanitarians can encourage armed actors to comply with norms*

RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH

- The focus on Iraq as the sole country-based case study makes the findings from this research particularly relevant to actors working in Iraq. However, the analysis and recommendations from the research are also based on wide consultations and research workshops which means the findings are generalisable and can inform global policy and practice.

OVERVIEW

Research team:

- GPPI
- Principal investigator Julia Steets (jsteets@gppi.net)

BEPAC priority areas and project focus:

- The proposal identifies priority area 2 (impact of protection programming) as the main priority area the research contributes to. However, the research also contributes to priority area 3 (impact of restraint),
- The research focused specifically on efforts to encourage restraint of armed actors. The research focuses on three main research questions:
 - Theory of change: What theories of change underlie different types of activities aiming to encourage restraint among armed actors?
 - Factors affecting the behaviour of armed actors: Which factors do armed actors in Iraq identify as influencing their own behaviour towards civilians?
 - Perceived effectiveness of interventions on restraint: Which protection activities aiming to encourage restraint have been documented in Iraq over the past 16 years?
- Questions 2 and 3 are focused on Northern Iraq. However, question 1 was informed by a wider global level engagement with practitioners through interviews and research workshops as well as a review of existing literature.

Methodology:

At the global level, the study conducted:

- A systematic review of literature including academic and grey literature.
- 148 interviews with entities involved in preventive protection including UN agencies, NATO, and other armed forces, as well as civil society organisations working on humanitarian, human rights and conflict management.
- 23 interviews with academics working in international relations, conflict and peace studies, peacekeeping, legal studies, humanitarian studies, and human rights.
- Research workshops.

In Northern Iraq, the study adopted the following methodological approach:

- Analysis and reconstruction of theories of change for restraint activities.
- Comparison of theories of change with perceptions of armed actors on what influences their behaviour towards civilians through conducting interviews.

- Analysis of armed actors, protection actors and conflict-affected communities' perceptions of the effectiveness of protection interventions through conducting interviews.
- 184 interviews were conducted in Northern Iraq.

Partners:

- Geneva Call
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- Institute of Regional and International Studies, an independent research organisation based in Iraq at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS)

FINDINGS

Summary of findings - Iraq:

- Protection organisations' perceptions and priorities (i.e., IPD returns and humanitarian space) did not match those of the communities in Northern Iraq (i.e., everyday harassment, verbal insults, violations of cultural and economic rights).
- The study found that the most critical factors influencing how armed actors treat civilians are:
 - The relationship between armed actors and local communities. When close to the local community, armed actors tend to share familial, tribal, and sectarian ties and therefore are more open to local efforts to influence their behaviour. This means that in diverse communities armed actors may act differently towards different population groups.
 - The level of training and discipline.
 - Ideology, values, objectives, and leadership of armed actors. For instance, armed actors that position themselves as protection forces against other armed actors tend to operate with restraint.
- Communities do try to engage armed actors mainly through local intermediaries most often in the case of Northern Iraq tribal leaders or councils of sheikhs, sometimes religious or church leaders and less often political appointees such as governors or mukhtars. These local elites give armed actors access to the community's material resources and local grassroots support as leverage.
- The study found that communities engaging armed actors on restraint have significant limitations:
 - It is less effective with non-local armed actors and communities/local intermediaries do not always have leverage.
 - It can reinforce established power structures and exclude minorities or marginalised groups.
 - The outcomes of these community engagements do not always conform to protection standards.
 - Community engagements with armed actors carry risks for those involved.
- In addition, the study found that local intermediaries or subnational elites are not benevolent protection actors and instead are deeply political actors who shape protection outcomes according to the pursuit of their own interests. When local intermediaries agree to act on behalf of the community, who benefits from their

- engagement with armed actors will align with local intermediaries' own interests and not the interest of the community at large.
- Efforts to support community capacity building to engage armed actors are too often fragmented, create duplications, waste resources, and undermine existing community-led interventions. They continue to be top-down even though they are there to support communities and too often are not in line with communities' own agency, approaches, and structures.
 - Engaging religious leaders to influence armed actors is one of the approaches used by protection actors with some limitations:
 - Difficulty in accessing religious leaders including by both local and international protection actors.
 - Religious leaders' own interpretation of Sharia law may not conform to international law.
 - The limited influence and at times unwillingness of religious leaders to engage armed actors in favour of their own political and economic interests.
 - Interventions that have supported affected communities' own engagement with armed actors have included in Northern Iraq:
 - Connecting communities to influential local intermediaries such as governors.
 - Acting as an intermediary to engage with armed actors on a specific issue.
 - Sharing data and analysis with communities to inform their advocacy with local authorities.
 - Setting up and supporting community protection groups to engage armed actors.

Relevance of findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

The study found that the following four main approaches are adopted by protection actors to influence armed actors' restraint with some success but also limitations:

- Naming and shaming armed actors: media attention is brought to the harmful deeds of armed actors. Pressure on them may increase enough to make them address the issue. This includes collecting, aggregating and validating data on civilian rights violations. External actors can play a significant role here in the aggregation and validation of data giving it more legitimacy but also in protecting local actors reporting on rights violations.
- Mobilising influencers: Efforts are made to convince influencers to exert pressure on or persuade armed actors to change their harmful behaviour. Here understanding the politics of powerful actors and armed actors is critical to influence change.
- Capacitating communities: protection actors support communities to influence the armed actor's behaviour toward them. As outlined above, interventions that have supported affected communities' own engagement with armed actors in Northern Iraq have included connecting communities to influential local intermediaries such as governors; acting as an intermediary to engage with armed actors on a specific issue; sharing data and analysis with communities to inform their advocacy with

local authorities; and setting up and supporting community protection groups to engage armed actors.

- Training armed actors: protection actors help an armed actor to change behaviour through training and technical support.
- The study report (Westphal et al., 2022) provides more details of each logic model in particular on success factors, analysis required to inform the approach, the risks associated with each approach, monitoring indicators, and possible complementary approaches and collaborations.

Additional implications for policy and practice include:

- The study argues that strengthening communities' capacities to engage with armed actors in Iraq has revealed 'many pitfalls and programmes than successes' and that 'these problems are so pervasive that they call into question the validity of the approach as a whole – at least in the way it has been implemented in Iraq in the post-ISIS period' (see forthcoming article in Stability). The study therefore cautions against assuming that all local community groups and leaders have the capacity, agency and influence to be partners in preventive protection.
- The study argues that a large part of the population, in particular Sunni Arab civilians, have lost their space for action and influence as a result of successive counterterrorism efforts that have benefited a small group of subnational elites. A key recommendation, as a result, is for the international community to reassess the consequences of perpetuating the vocabulary and politics of counterterrorism and to develop an entirely new language for engagement with Iraq (see forthcoming article in Security Dialogue).
- For protection interventions that aim to support strengthening the affected communities' capacity to negotiate directly with armed actors:
 - Organisations need to have a nimble and nuanced knowledge of local (rather than macro level) political and power dynamics. This is necessary to understand which influential individuals or institutions could potentially be mobilised in specific situations to support civilian protection and where windows of opportunities exist. Is there space for communities and their representatives to negotiate with armed actors in a way that makes engagement worthwhile? Which individuals and groups in the community hold power and who is marginalised? What community structures exist and what other initiatives are there to strengthen them?
 - Organisations need to address their top-down logic to truly support communities in their engagement with armed actors.
 - Organisations need to balance power and diversity in community structures. To what extent does the committee you support need to reflect existing power structures to ensure that it has leverage for example when negotiating with armed actors? To what extent should it include representatives of less powerful or marginalised groups to make it more diverse and inclusive? What differences matter most in the given context – gender, age, ethnic or tribal background, sexual orientation?
- Protection organisations need to proactively check their perceptions and priorities with affected communities to ensure these are aligned. Protection organisations should not dismiss everyday protection threats as perceived by affected

communities and broader violations of human rights as addressing these could contribute to reducing tensions and preventing future violence.

- The study found there was a lack of coordination and collaboration when training armed actors and building their capacities. Closer cooperation, synergy and collaboration between humanitarian, human rights and military actors would increase their impact on civilian protection. The study specifically recommends:
 - Wherever possible, humanitarians should seek to integrate their messages on international humanitarian law and civilian protection into core military curricula and training programmes. To achieve this, they should also strengthen their global engagement and advocacy with military actors and training institutions that conduct training and build capacity among armed actors in third countries (see forthcoming article in Stability).
- The study highlights that regional and local actors are usually driving efforts to influence the behaviour of armed actors and in preventive protection. External/international actors tend to face limitations in their ability to influence local processes. The study also argues that the current international aid system is at odds with genuine community-based approaches to protection as donors and aid organisations continue to design and make decisions about interventions that reflect their own logic rather than the logic of communities.

Links to findings in other research projects:

- The discrepancy between protection actors' perceptions or priorities and affected communities' perceptions especially in terms of how violence, coercion and deprivation happens in every every-day is also raised by research projects led by Bath (South Sudan), LSE (South Sudan), and IDS (eastern DRC).
- The findings of this project on the positive impact on restraint of training armed non-state actors on IHL, naming and shaming, and mobilising influence are further corroborated by the Geneva Academy project (based on seven case studies including in Afghanistan, Colombia Lebanon, Mali, and the Philippines).

IMPACT

- The project delivered a range of outputs targeted at different audiences and in a range of formats with a practice-oriented report on GPPI's website, a summary and practice guide, an article in the Humanitarian Exchange Magazine, a podcast, a film, and academic articles.
- Through their operational partner NRC, an internal workshop was conducted with NRC staff to discuss the practical implications of the research and the applicability of findings outside of Iraq.
- A multistakeholder workshop (involving NGOs, UN, and military organisations) was held in Iraq to discuss the results of the research. Bilateral briefings (a majority of which in Iraq with FCDO, the US Department of State, UK Consulate) and a policy discussion in Berlin were also organised.
- The research was also widely disseminated in relevant conferences: International Humanitarian Studies Association, and PAX Protection of civilian's conference.

- As a follow-up to this research, GPPI is currently working with the ICRC on their prevention and protection policies and approaches.
- During the research period, an NGO in the field was developing a theory of change for its protection activities and, according to this NGO, this was informed and reflects the findings of the research.
- The project also invested during the scoping stage of the research in engaging and consulting a large number of practitioners who indicated their interest in the findings and therefore, when the research was finalised, the research team was able to go back to an already engaged audience.

OUTPUTS (as reviewed)

- (forthcoming) Staying safe amidst armed groups: experience of strengthening civilian protection in Iraq, in Stability (forthcoming). Note this was reviewed in draft form.
- (forthcoming) The politics of civilian protection in Iraq, in Security Dialogue (forthcoming). Note this was reviewed in draft form.
- Westphal, F., Stoffel, S.L. and Steets, J. (2022) The logic of protection approaches: four models to safeguard civilians from harm. GPPI. (https://gppi.net/media/2022_PoC_Iraq_Report.pdf)
- Saferworld's Warpod episode 18: Protecting civilians in Iraq (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/multimedia/saferworlds-warpod-episode-18-protecting-civilians-in-iraq>)
- Steets, J. (2023) Three key lessons from efforts to strengthen community protection in Iraq in Humanitarian Exchange Issue 82, 8 January 16, 2023. HPN and ODI: London. (<https://odihpn.org/publication/three-key-lessons-from-efforts-to-strengthen-community-protection-in-iraq/>)

Project review summary: *New community-informed approaches to humanitarian protection and restraint*

RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH

- This research focuses on eastern DRC. The findings of this research are quite specific to that context and do not, in themselves, inform global policy and practice. However, the findings of this research, reflect existing knowledge and practice on gender-based violence. As such, it confirms known trends and reaffirms current practices.

OVERVIEW

Research team:

- Institution Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
- Principal investigator Jeremy Marc Allouche J.Allouche@ids.ac.uk

BEPAC priority areas and project focus:

- The project focuses on priority 3 on the impact of restraint and priority area 4 on the impact of local protection mechanisms.
- The initial research aimed at understanding the factors that promote restraint and de-escalation in violent environments including:
 - What can we learn from community successes in avoiding violence through local institutions?
 - Is the restraint with respect to sexual and gender-based violence different to other forms of physical restraint?
 - How have these adaptations evolved in these communities' value systems and how can humanitarian learn and support them?
- However, the research shifted in discussion with the operational partner to focus instead on the following research questions:
 - What are the existing vernacular understandings of protection in eastern DRC?
 - What strategies are employed by women's groups to promote women's protection at the community level?
 - How do women's groups navigate between international standards and societal gender norms to do so?
- The research focuses solely on eastern DRC, more specifically North and South Kivu.

Methodology:

The research team adopted a qualitative approach using ethnographic methods as well as arts:

- Stakeholder mapping to identify the range of protection programmes in operations in South and North Kivu which led to the selection of Oxfam's and ActionAid's protection programmes.
- Review of policy and operational documents of Oxfam and ActionAid.

- Review of grey literature on gender-based violence and principles of gendered violence from the Congolese government, humanitarian donors, and actors.
- Facilitated a workshop with 16 artists to explore vernacular understandings of protection. These led to eight projects on interpretations of protection which were showcased at an exhibition (photos and paintings) as well as theatre plays, songs, dance, protection of a storybook and slam.
- Three rounds of fieldwork in locations where Oxfam and ActionAid had ongoing activities on women's protection which included semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with members of women's groups, women leaders, customary and religious leaders, state and military authorities, civil society, traditional healers and elders, NGO staff, local partners, and community agents. In total, 37 focus group discussions and 67 key informant interviews were conducted.
- Four restitution workshops were organised with participants in the research including members of the community.

Partners:

- Action Aid UK with support and collaboration from Action Aid in DRC.

FINDINGS

Summary of findings:

Four key findings emerged from the research:

- While women experience multiple forms of violence and persisting vulnerability resulting from the conflict as well as restrictive gender norms, they do exercise some degree of individual and collective agenda to secure self and collective protection and can advocate for their rights.
- Women's groups provide opportunities for women to build individual leadership capacities and enable them to collectively participate in decision-making spaces and processes that influence protection strategies adopted by the community.
- The nature of these spaces vary and can best be described as hybrid rather than solely community-led or bottom-up.
- The research also highlights that violence against women goes far beyond the narrative of rape as a weapon of war. Instead, structural violence such as domestic violence, barriers to accessing resources, and women's systematic exclusion from peace processes and political decision-making increase during and directly after conflict. The research found that Westernised definitions of protection promoted in INGO projects do not adequately capture protection risks as identified by women. Exposure to violence against women and girls is often conditioned by other factors such as poverty or social marginalisation. According to the research team, this research has therefore contributed to a more nuanced and contextualised understanding of the meaning, narratives, and practices of protection in eastern DRC and has added to broader debates on humanitarian, gender and community protection.

Women's groups use various strategies to advocate for their rights:

- Use their knowledge of human rights standards and Congolese laws to reinterpret customs and influence local decision-makers on issues relevant to women's protection.
- Tailor their framing to engage with different stakeholders.
- Use informal networks to access these stakeholders and build alliances.

Structural factors affect the ability of women's groups to advocate for themselves which needs to be addressed to sustain efforts by women's led protection mechanisms:

- The effects of protracted conflict on governance
- Illiteracy
- Inequality
- Poverty

Women who take on leadership roles to prevent and reduce GBV in their communities tend to face backlash mainly in terms of reputation. These threats to women's reputations come from both men and women in the community and can occur in the community space as well as domestically.

Relevance of findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

- The findings of this research are not new to the GBV sector. Instead, they reaffirm through more rigorous methods, the importance of considering and addressing non-conflict related gender-based violence in GBV programming as these increase during and directly after conflict. The research team argues that the protection and GBV sectors tend to "obscure" these experiences of gender-based violence by focusing on conflict-related rape.
- The findings also call for protection actors to start by understanding what threats and risks exist for women in their day-to-day lives and how these are framed so programming can fit with these everyday experiences of violence. The research calls for greater reflection on what protection means at the local and community level, being sensitive to cultural and societal interpretations while critically engaging with local vernacular understandings. The research also highlights that factors other than cultural and societal norms affect gender relations. As a result, the research calls for more transformative approaches that focus on structural factors such as poverty, lack of economic empowerment and conflict around inheritance, dowry and land ownership.
- The findings also confirm that supporting women's groups and working with community-based structures including through strengthening their capacity for influence and advocacy and their understanding of national and international law is effective to mitigate, reduce and prevent day-to-day violence against women. The research calls for approaches to protection that frame women as agents of change and start from the protection strategies already used by women. The research warns that women's strategies for influence are highly context-specific and depend on their networks. As such, approaches that are built on conceptions and strategies that are largely external to the context are often short-lived, inefficient and can expose women to further risks. A better understanding of the social and cultural contexts is required to shift away from simply responding to GBV to finding ways to support women to challenge and address issues of GBV.

- INGOs with programmes on gender transformative protection must consider the unintended consequences of the programmes and potential backlashes. Training and sensitisation of the wider community including men, local, customary, and religious authorities have not had as positive an impact as envisaged.

Links to findings in other research projects:

- The findings of this research project are echoed by the Portsmouth research in South Sudan which also highlights the high prevalence of structural and day-to-day violence against women and girls as opposed to conflict-related sexual violence.

IMPACT

- The focus of this project was on influencing protection actors present locally in eastern DRC as well as communities and local government. The research team engaged through their operational partner with the protection cluster and the sub-cluster on gender-based violence.
- The project had an impact on the artists it worked with, strengthening their understanding of protection as well as connecting them with key actors on this issue. These artists started an artistic cluster to continue working on protection and humanitarian issues. Artistic exhibitions were organised in Goma, North Kivu and Bukavu, South Kivu with press and radio relays.
- According to the research team, the main impact of the research has been to counter the narrative of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and highlight the critical importance of addressing the increase in structural and day-to-day violence experienced by women in particular intimate partner violence and exclusion from decision-making fora.
- The research team also engaged extensively with FCDO in DRC as well as globally.
- In addition, a launch and exhibition of the research and artistic work were done in London with NGOs and think tanks.

OUTPUTS

- Maubert, C., Allouche, J., Hamuli, I., Kulumbwa Lulego, E., Marchais, G., Mushi Mugumo, F., and Nazneen, S. (2022) Women's Agency and Humanitarian Protection in North and South Kivu, DRC. Working Paper Number 578, November 2022. Brighton: IDS. (<https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/womens-agency-and-humanitarian-protection-in-north-and-south-kivu-drc/>)
- Ignatiou, N, with Allouche, J., Hamuli, I., Kasoki, C., Marchais, G., Maubert, C., Neves, P., Parke, A., Shillito, E., and Yakubi, S. (2022) Women's Agency and Humanitarian Protection Strategies: A Case Study of DRC. Policy brief. London and Brighton: Action Aid and IDS. ([https://www.actionaid.org.uk/publications/womens-agency-humanitarian-strategies#:~:text=The%20brief%20showcases%20findings%20and,Republic%20of%20Congo%20\(DRC\).](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/publications/womens-agency-humanitarian-strategies#:~:text=The%20brief%20showcases%20findings%20and,Republic%20of%20Congo%20(DRC).))

- Acteurs du Changement : les artistes et la protection, YouTube Video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ju2gnmU5Nws&list=PLNI18GVaeqKulSxupvZhe2diiQFvsGU>)
- Agents of change : artists promotion protection, YouTube Video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3E2ssdpHvk&list=PLNI18GVaeqKulSxupvZhe2diiQFvsGU&index=3>)
- Allouche, J. and Maubert, C. (2021) “How to co-produce transdisciplinary and plural knowledge to solve complex humanitarian problems? An illustration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo”, Humanitarian Alternatives, no. 17, July 2021, pp.25-40. (<https://alternatives-humanitaires.org/en/2021/07/20/how-to-co-produce-transdisciplinary-and-plural-knowledge-to-solve-complex-humanitarian-problems-an-illustration-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>)
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- Resilience Congo (2022) Comment la zone de la protection humanitaire est-elle définie sur le plan opérationnel? Une rencontre problématique avec la RDC et son autre côté. (<https://medium.com/@ResilienceCongo/comment-la-zone-de-la-protection-humanitaire-est-elle-d%C3%A9finie-sur-le-plan-op%C3%A9rationnel-64e3769ef3f7>)
- Fierens, M, (2022) Information, communication et action humanitaire à Goma : des liens étroits et ambigus. Resilience Congo. (<https://medium.com/@ResilienceCongo/information-communication-et-action-humanitaire-à-goma-des-liens-étroits-et-ambigus-68ccf79e0d5b>)
- Maubert, C. and Kasoki, C. (2022) Le leadership des femmes dans l’est de la RDC — Perspectives de la société civile du Nord Kivu. Résilience Congo. (<https://medium.com/@ResilienceCongo/le-leadership-des-femmes-dans-lest-de-la-rdc-perspectives-de-la-soci%C3%A9t%C3%A9-civile-du-nord-kivu-638ca7a6db32>)

Project review summary: *Understanding the realities of humanitarian protection*

RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH

- The research focused on Uganda, South Sudan and Sudan. As such, the below findings are most relevant to staff members working in these countries although the main findings are mainly based on research in South Sudan. Some of the findings on the need to adopt a more everyday understanding of protection to inform protection approaches that support self-protection strategies should inform global policy and practice. In addition, the research findings on the use of the Protection of Civilians sites by the peacekeeping mission in South Sudan contribute to the wider debate and ongoing reform of UN peacekeeping missions and their protection of civilian mandate.

OVERVIEW

Research team:

- Institution Lond School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)
- Principal investigator Tim Allen (t.allen@lse.ac.uk)
 - Contact for South Sudan: Naomi Pendle (nrp36@bath.ac.uk)

BEPAC priority areas and project focus:

- This research project focused on priority area 2 on the impact of protection programming and priority area 4 on the impact of local protection mechanisms.
- The research aimed to answer the following research questions:
 - How do people and institutions in South Sudan and its borderlands effectively provide safety and dignity to strangers through local, national, and international mechanisms?
 - What normative schemes and arrangements of power do these mechanisms entrench?
 - Through what processes are groups and individuals included or excluded?
- Most of the research was conducted in South Sudan with some of the research conducted in Uganda and in Sudan (Khartoum).

Methodology:

- The research methodology included qualitative research methods more specifically ethnographic methods using interviews and observation during field visits.
- Art was also used as part of the research project. The project invited artists to reframe the concepts of protection and resilience through the display of and discussion about artistic production, heritage, and creativity as alternative knowledge registers. The methods used were participatory and dialogic and included commissioned artworks, photo voice and story circles.

Partners:

- Three operational research partners were involved in this research: the Norwegian Refugee Council, Nile Hope (a South Sudanese NGO), and CARD (the diocese of Wau's local development wing).

FINDINGS

Summary of findings:

- The research found that what organisations label as protection differs from the everyday understandings and priorities for the protection of people affected by conflicts. For conflict-affected people in South Sudan, protection activities are primarily those that keep civilians safe in the context of an immediate threat to them by armed actors. Protection for these people is not about rights but about physical safety and reducing violence. Yet, this is not the focus of the protection activities of humanitarians. The research argues that, as a result, humanitarians are not best placed to keep civilians safe.
- Instead, the focus should be on self-protection. The research found that South Sudanese public authority figures such as chiefs, witchdoctors, vigilantes, bishops, Pentecostals, Nuer prophets and women leaders are central to a range of strategies to try and keep people safe in South Sudan. Spirituality and the use of divine authorities are commonly used as a source of protection. Social networks and relationships are also a source of protection. Many in South Sudan revert to removing themselves from political spaces and not participating politically to keep safe. However, the research also found that self-protection strategies make use of militarised protection, violence, and exclusionary ideologies.
- The research highlights the close relationship between providing protection and the building of public authority: through the protection of civilians, a range of actors whether governments, armed non-state actors, chiefs, religious leaders, UN Mission, or NGOs can build authority. As a result, the research argues that protection should be understood as bound up with power and politics.
- Specifically in Khartoum, the research found that the classification of South Sudanese as refugees following a UNHCR policy ended the quasi-citizenship of South Sudanese and Sudanese solidarity including church-based solidarity movements which were critical to South Sudanese's survival and dignity.
- In South Sudan, the research found that it was critical to pay attention to micro-politics and everyday reality to judge whether the Protection of Civilian sites brought improved safety and security. The research highlights that people living in the PoC sites rebuilt shelters, claimed legal jurisdiction, and stayed connected to worlds beyond the camp in order to stay safe. The research took place at the time when UNMISS was redesignating the majority of PoC sites and withdrawing from them. The research found that as a result PoC site resident have become politically silent and concealed their identities in order to stay safe as UN protection was withdrawn. The research highlights that as part of the transition from UN to government protection, the UN should have better anticipated, planned for, and introduced activities to support continued camp security building on existing practices in the camps. UN actors should have also invested in restoring trust

between camp residents and the police as well as between community watch groups and the police.

- Research showed how musicking, the processes of creating, performing, and listening to music, as well as constructing meaning in music offers an alternative lens to better understand people's protection priorities in contexts where lived experiences can be too emotive or political to be verbalized in other ways.
- The research also found that legal institutions and norms are important for providing protection during war and the return of displaced persons. The absence of legal institutions has made it easier for military leaders to mobilise armed forces by inciting a popular demand for revenge. Legal reform can create a legal vacuum and legal uncertainty. In South Sudan, legal reform created competition between the High Court and chiefs' court igniting further armed conflict. The research found that chiefs' courts are commonly set up during displacement to ensure legal continuity (including in PoC sites where they received ambiguous support). Law has been used in South Sudan to resolve disputes but also to push back against predatory governments and armed groups. The research found that chiefs and their courts assumed a key role in mediating between the SPLA and the civilian populations.
- The research also looked at the relationship between health and protection as the research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research explored how protection and healing from physical harm during wartime violence often blurs boundaries between disease and violence; how moral harm from armed conflict is often experienced as an illness which requires healing; and how such illness has interacted with the threat of illness from disease such as Covid.

Relevance of findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

- The research focuses on in-depth anthropological understandings of South Sudan and its borderlands and as such it is not always easy to extrapolate the more global relevance of findings.
- The research clearly highlights the importance of having a much greater understanding of the local realities of people affected by conflict and displacement, adopting an "everyday" approach to understanding protection risks and threats. It calls for adopting much more ethnographic lines of enquiry to inform protection programming to ensure that these align with people's realities rather than foreign and external conceptions of protection. Taking an everyday approach to protection should also guide humanitarian organisations as to which self-protection strategies can and should be supported.
- Protection should also be redefined to concentrate on physical safety and the reduction of violence as opposed to rights. This would align better with how people affected by conflict in South Sudan expect from protection interventions and protection actors.
- The research project also supported the capacity of the South Sudanese Bridge Network to develop the Measuring Safety and Security (MSS) method. This method is used for monitoring and understanding aid agencies' impact on South Sudanese perception of their safety. The method relies on qualitative and quantitative research but mainly uses ethnographic monitoring methods. It is being

used systematically in South Sudan by WFP, IOM and other NGOs and the UN mission. This practice should be documented further and replicated in other contexts.

Links to findings in other research projects:

- The findings of this research project are echoed by the IDS research in eastern DRC which also highlights the need to understand everyday experiences of violence and local vernaculars of protection.
- The findings of this research project on the importance of art, music and other creative activities are echoed by the Portsmouth research in South Sudan which points to the psychosocial benefits of embroidery and the use of Story Circles to discuss sensitive and emotive topics such as gender-based violence.

IMPACT

- The adoption of the Measuring Safety and Security monitoring methods by organisations such as WFP, and IOM is a great measure of impact. This method allows these organisations to adopt a much better understanding of protection and the impact of their programmes on protection that aligns with people's everyday realities.
- Policy engagements were done with UNDPKO and UNMISS as well as with the FCDO to brief diplomats during their Sudan Away Day and a briefing of the new UK Ambassador to South Sudan. These were all based on the research conducted.
- The research team presented a policy report to UNMISS and World Relief on the importance of the chiefs' courts in enforcing restraint and cohesion even during war. The research highlighted at the same time that these chiefs' courts were being marginalised by courts through their procedures and reasoning. Following this policy engagement, UNMISS funded paralegals to work in the Chiefs courts in Koch County and supported the lobbying of the commission, so women are now members of the highest court in Koch County.
- The research team has also engaged with the UN Headquarters in New York on their findings on the Protection of Civilians sites to contribute to ongoing conversations and reforms on the UN peacekeeping missions.

OUTPUTS

- Please note that this research project provides a very long list of outputs in ResearchFish, Research Gate and in their final report. However, a number of these outputs were difficult to find or not published yet. Another set of outputs was not relevant to the main research questions, priority areas or protection policy and practice more generally.
- Please note that not all the publications below were fully reviewed. All abstracts were reviewed and where relevant the full publication was reviewed.
- Craze, J. and Pendle, N. (2020) A Fantasy of Finality: The UN Impasse at the Protection of Civilian Sites in South Sudan. Blog.

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Project review summary: *Tackling VAWG in times of conflict: responding to youth voices from South Sudan.*

RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH

- This research focuses on one case study and the findings are most relevant for staff members working in South Sudan rather than informing global policy and practice. However, the research findings are also a contribution to the What Works to End VAWG effort of FCDO and should be further considered as adding further evidence to this ongoing work.

OVERVIEW

Research team:

- Institution Portsmouth University
- Principal investigator Tamsin Bradley (tamsin.bradley@port.ac.uk)

BEPAC priority areas and project focus:

- This research focused on priority area 2 on the impact of protection programming, priority area 4 on local protection mechanisms and priority area 6 on targeting.
- The research aimed to compare the extent of vulnerabilities across contexts and consider how different forms of youth displacement may require varied types of programme responses. The research also aimed to better understand what works to reduce the violence suffered by young women and girls during protracted displacement caused by conflict. The research aimed to answer the following research questions:
 - How do South Sudanese female adolescents and young women articulate their experience of violence and displacement, and how/why does this differ from the ways in which young men do?
 - How are cultural gender roles (including behaviours, aspirations, and identities) reproduced/modified in the fluid context of displacement? (again, comparing differences between boys and girls).
 - How are these changes characterised as intersectionally (included here are measures of exclusion such as disability)?
 - How do young people express their agency?
 - How can/do development programmes interact with these factors to increase or hinder young women and girl's autonomy?
 - What potential is there to use the arts as a way of understanding and building the resilience of young women and girls?
 - What potential is there to use the arts as a way of understanding and developing a gender-equal perspective in young men?
 - How can our data be worked into project design and M&E to facilitate the participation of young people and to ensure that they can hold NGOs meaningfully to account?
 - What outcomes can we expect in relation to VAWG reduction and increased gender equality?

- Another set of research questions were also provided by the research project:
 - What types of vulnerabilities are triggered by displacement, or intensified as a result? (e.g. violence, disrupted education/social structures, food insecurity, poor mental health).
 - To what extent are these vulnerabilities shaped by gender, culture, and religion?
 - How are/could these vulnerabilities be reversed by building robust forms of protection mechanisms resilience through livelihoods (linked to education/training, social anchoring etc.)?
 - How should protracted conflict-triggered displacement be understood and contextualised by national governments, humanitarian, and development sectors?
 - What can/would complex and nuanced rethinking of the key term's displacement, protection, sustainability and resilience offer in terms of more sensitive programme and project planning for young people?
 - How can we ensure that these insights support host stakeholders to efficiently and comprehensively respond to the needs of displaced youth?
- The geographic focus of the research was displaced South Sudanese in South Sudan and Uganda.

Methodology:

The research team conducted both qualitative and quantitative research:

- Scoping and systematic review of global evidence on what works to support the sustainable development of displaced youth.
- Reflective evaluation of past programmes and generations to evidence what works to respond specifically to the vulnerabilities suffered by young women and girls.
- Thematic learning through arts-humanities methods. An innovative technique called Story Circles was used to gather the experiences of young people. The Story Circles approach is a sensitive data collection tool. It was further used as a process for young people to work together to create a single narrative from the original circle transcript, translate it into a play and a radio drama and then perform and record it for dissemination in and across their communities. Audience groups confirmed high levels of engagement and follow-up research demonstrated that the dramas were remembered and triggered wider conversations. While more research is needed to understand the impact of these conversations, the medium-term impact looks promising.
- Development of new pilot interventions.
- Interviews with 2,500 women.
- Prevalence study including building the frame for sampling.

Partners:

- Plan in South Sudan and Plan International in the UK.



Summary of findings:

- Fragility triggered by displacement increases individual, household, and communal tensions which has a negative impact including levels of inter-personal violence and conflict rape.
- In South Sudan, conflict and displacement trigger an increase in violence by the underlying cause is the high levels of normalisation of violence against women and girls.
- The survey revealed an alarming high level of intimate partner violence and normalisation of violence in the lives of women and girls. Violence is normalised in the mindset of both men and women.
- The research found that approaches to supporting youth and reducing VAWG are still not localised and contextualised. This stems from a lack of data and utilisation of local knowledge. Most interventions rely on standard activities that do not have a rigorous evidence base behind them.
- Activities that introduce dialogues on harmful norms and more positive behaviours are welcomed by local communities but only if these dialogues are owned by young people, then the impact can be transformative.
- In South Sudan, the historical and political context has intersected with an array of patriarchal social and cultural norms that have in turn shaped an environment in which GBV is sanctioned across multiple spheres from household to public and militarised spaces. The stakeholders most focused on challenging and transforming the underlying causes of harmful norms were women-led organisations. This category of organisations is motivated by feminist activism which shapes a distinctive focus on driving political transformation in order to achieve gender equality and an end to GBV.
- The research highlighted that the stories of women contrasted with the current dominance in humanitarian action of psychosocial responses such as the provision of women-friendly spaces. Instead, forms of art such as the process of embroidering with other women were found to be a space for women to speak about their lives, and create self-worth, dignity, and some form of financial independence. The research highlights that there is very little evidence that current interventions that are adapted from Westernised counselling trauma models work or that female survivors find them helpful. Violence and therefore the responses to violence must be conceptualised within the web of social and gendered relationships that make women's social and cultural capital. This capital offers both psychosocial healing and economic opportunities.
- The quantitative analysis highlights that the factors of risks and prevalence of different forms of violence against women and girls are highly context specific.

Relevance of findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

- These findings evidenced the need to focus efforts on changing social and cultural norms that embed gender inequality and legitimise violence. The frequency and incidence of domestic violence need to be addressed separately from trauma associated with war. Programmes must focus on addressing the normalisation of domestic violence over conflict-related trauma. This means that humanitarian actors must address and start transforming harmful social norms in the midst of

conflict and emergency responses thus embedding social norm change activities within humanitarian programming. The switch to preventive interventions over responsive approaches needs to be made.

- Social and gender norm changes must be better contextualised through strong political economy analysis and through applying a nuanced critique of the role of culture in normalising many forms of VAWG. This calls for a greater continuum of approaches from the national level all the way to the grassroots level.
- The research also highlights the imperative to engage young people on affecting the tolerance and the prevalence of violence to decrease violence against women and girls. The research suggests a more radical and evidence-based approach is needed that departs from the current reliance on social norm change workshops. Instead, the research calls for focus in an engaged and daily way with young people whose aspirations for the future increasingly align with the goals of gender equality.
- Supporting, partnering, and collaborating with women-led organisations in ending VAWG and changing social and cultural norms is critical as these are the actors most active and effective in driving political and societal transformation. The research highlights that working with these organisations is more effective rather than working with NGOs they will only tick the GBV box but not approach VAWG from a feminist angle.

Links to findings in other research projects:

- The findings of this research project are echoed by the IDS research in eastern DRC which also highlights the high prevalence of structural and day-to-day violence against women and girls as opposed to conflict-related sexual violence.
- The importance of engaging youth and working with youth has also emerged from the SIPRI project.

IMPACT

- The research findings were presented to the UN GBV hub in South Sudan.
- Plan International has integrated the findings of the research and adapted its programmes with youth and on VAWG. The new approach focuses more specifically on social and cultural norm change working with young people. This includes the use of Story Circles as a programmatic approach.
- The use of Story Circles as a methodology to develop communication material on social norms, and violence and to enable youth participation was identified as an interesting practice and adopted in the region by other projects funded by FCDO (African-led Movement to end FGM/C – more specifically in the project in Isiolo and Narok in Kenya).
- The research team is planning more work with the What Works to End VAWG research team at FCDO.
- The research team also reaffirmed the methodological approach to conducting GBV prevalence survey in areas that do not have an existing population census. The operational partner welcomed having up-to-date rigorous prevalence data to have a truly evidence-based approach to their programming in South Sudan. Plan

has used the data from the prevalence survey in project proposals and feels better able to make the case for addressing social norms in humanitarian responses as well as showcase the sheer scale of GBV needs.

OUTPUTS

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Project review summary: *Humanitarian protection in the Liptako-Gourma region*

RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH

- This research project focuses specifically on the Liptako-Gourma region of the Sahel, which comprises the contiguous areas of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The

research project's findings are time-bound and specific to the geographical location while adding to the understanding of local protection mechanisms and links between local and humanitarian protection mechanisms. The research project can serve as a template for monitoring and evaluating humanitarian protection programmes and providing relevant insights for program cycles. The project uses a longitudinal design, collecting data through focus group discussions, qualitative interviews, and perception surveys (repeat cross-sectional studies) for analysis. The findings of this research would be helpful as background or context information for people working in the region while contributing to the literature on local protection mechanisms.

OVERVIEW

Research team:

- Institution: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)
- Principal investigator Virginie Baudais virginie.baudais@sipri.org

BEPAC priority areas and project focus:

- This project focuses on priority area 3 on the impact of restraints and priority area 4 on local protection mechanisms.
- The project examines 6 research questions:
 - What are the protection threats, risks, and vulnerabilities across the different groups of the population of Liptako-Gourma?
 - What local protection mechanism do they use? On which social norms and rules are they based?
 - What is the relation between local protection mechanisms and restraint from violence? Are there risks for people to protect themselves?
 - How do humanitarian protection responses interact with local protection mechanisms (positive, neutral, or negative)?
 - How do the different groups of the population assess the impact of humanitarian responses on their own protection and safety?
 - How can humanitarian protection optimally complement and support local protection mechanisms, without having any possible unintended negative consequences?
- The project aimed to:
 - Integrate an evidence-based approach to addressing restraints and local protection mechanisms in humanitarian programmes in the Liptako-Region.
 - Strengthen the effectiveness of the Danish Refugee Council's humanitarian protection programme in 2021-2022 through integrating evidence-based lessons learned.
- The project focuses on a specific region of the Sahel, the Liptako-Gourma region which spread across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

Methodology:

This project adopted a specific approach and understanding of protection risks, protection responses, and local protection mechanisms. These understandings were discussed and agreed upon with the operational research partner, DRC, and therefore was a shared understanding among the stakeholders involved. In this project:

- Protection risks are defined as all risks and needs emanating from the conflict.
- Protection responses are therefore any assistance aimed to respond to those needs.
- Local protection mechanisms are mutual-aid, and solidarity provided by communities hosting displaced and conflict-affected populations.

The research team adopted a mixed methods longitudinal approach:

- Two rounds of qualitative and quantitative data collection through perception surveys and focus group discussions and qualitative interviews.

Partners:

- SIPRI worked in collaboration with the Danish Refugee Council and local research partners (Centre for Democratic Governance in Burkina Faso; Point Sud in Mali; Laboratoire d'études et de recherche sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local (LASDEL) in Niger.

FINDINGS

Summary of findings:

The following findings relate to the time of the research (2020-2022) as well as the geographic location (Liptako-Gourma region). However, learning from these findings can inform policy and practice more widely.

- For the people surveyed protection means firstly security and physical protection, secondly access to basic social services, and thirdly psychological well-being and protection.
- The study found that the involvement of youth in armed groups is driven by structural poverty. Bad governance is also regarded as a factor. Governance challenges were highlighted strongly in quantitative and qualitative data with a focus on the poor quality of infrastructures, access to basic services, social injustice, and lack of equity in local authorities' management of public affairs.
- Local protection mechanisms include:
 - Local, customary, religious and communal authorities playing a central role in the reception and settlement of displaced people.
 - Dialogue and reconciliation committees are set up in villages.
 - Community dialogue led by elders.
 - Religious leaders managing local conflicts.
 - Young people ensure village surveillance and patrolling areas.
 - Local civil society sensitisation to encourage youth to report suspicious activity.
 - Women's groups focus on preventing the recruitment of children and young people into armed groups.
- Mechanisms for resolving conflict are present in all localities and are perceived as successful by more than 90% of respondents. These traditional mechanisms are

effective in the prevention and management of certain social and land-related conflicts (intra and inter-community tensions). They are not effective for more recent conflicts and those linked with the presence of armed groups. Mechanisms for dialogue, mediation and inter-communal alliances can be counter-productive in the fight against terrorism. This is because the individuals involved in such mechanisms tend to be targeted by armed groups.

- The study highlights that the protracted crisis and long-term displacement weaken local powers and community protection mechanisms. Three factors are highlighted:
 - A weakening of traditional mechanisms due to the prolongation of the crisis. The security situation affects negatively local conflict prevention and humanitarian protection systems. Mistrust between communities has increased due to high insecurity. Armed actors have targeted the guarantors of social orders including traditional and religious leaders as well as local elected officials.
 - Host population fatigue with hosting/protracted displacement and the resulting pressure on financial and over natural resources.
 - Frustration with aid distribution.
- However, in some communities, initiatives to create communal mediation committees which bring together, religious, customary, and elected authorities with women and youth leaders have aimed to create a space for dialogue and finding community-based solutions.
- The study found that the relationship between aid actors and the population was not effective as:
 - The population did not know how to contact aid actors and were not well informed of the protection services available to them.
 - Decisions were made without consultation with the population but by local authorities.
 - The population was not used to interact with aid actors (women more than men).
- The study concludes that:
 - Solidarity is first and foremost family and community based and it precedes that of the state or NGOs.
 - Endogenous protection mechanisms are considered to be the most effective by the population.
 - Humanitarian mechanisms are recognised as effective and complementary to the first.

Relevance of findings for humanitarian policy and practice:

- Humanitarian aid mechanisms are complementary to local protection mechanisms in the following way:
 - Training and awareness raising of local actors and local committees on managing insecurity and on how to protect the resource persons involved in security monitoring.

- Complementary external assistance response following initial mutual aid and solidarity from communities.
- The provision of aid helps reduce tension between the displaced and the host.
- Adopt an integrated approach and address more systematically through programming poverty, access to employment, social justice, and equitable access to public services as these are people’s main concerns and drivers of intercommunal tension.
- Adopt a community-based and participatory approach to the fight against violent extremism and focus on rebuilding trust between communities and strengthening social cohesion.
- Support existing local protection systems and integrate them in externally supported action without institutionalising them. Support the role of traditional and customary authorities and strengthen their inclusive engagement of communities in particular the most vulnerable groups.
- Take into account the negative impact of protracted displacement on both host and displaced communities and ensure the inclusion of host communities in support mechanisms.
- Improve communities with conflict-affected populations to make them stronger and more systematised.
- Conduct more systematic and ongoing protection analysis to inform protection programming and highlight the importance of documenting the protection situation and measuring changes. For the operational partner involved, the rigorous nature of the protection analysis conducted by SIPRI adds value to the commonly used multi-sectoral needs assessment and protection analysis approaches in humanitarian responses.
- The operation partner’s main takeaway from the research is the importance of focusing on youth and their livelihoods as a priority in the Sahel region. DRC has designed a new project named SHIFT – Supporting host communities and IDPs to facilitate sustainable transition towards inclusive solutions. SHIFT adopts a livelihoods graduation approach with a mix of providing a social safety net, and addressing basic needs through food assistance, coaching, peacebuilding, and access to services.

IMPACT

- The project targeted mainly DRC, its operational partner, and aimed at ensuring an evidence-based approach to their protection programming. The project also aimed to influence the greater humanitarian community in the Liptako-Gourma region in particular the protection cluster, local civil society, local authorities, and donors.
- The findings from the perception surveys were integrated into DRC’s programming internally in strategic planning, to inform integrated programming selection between protection, social cohesion, armed violence reduction and economic recovery, as well as externally in project proposals to donors. The findings also informed DRC’s global strategy 2022-2025 in particular in terms of preparing to engage with partners and plan for increased localisation, as well as re-centring the

importance of ongoing protection analysis. The findings from the research were instrumental in ensuring stronger commitments from senior management on these issues. This was facilitated by having a validation workshop with DRC and all the members of the consortium.

- The research informed DRC's 3-year country strategies in the central Sahel. Sectors-specific responses were also developed for protection, food security and economic recovery, coordination, peacebuilding, and armed violence reduction. The research informed the following four key pillars on which these are based:
 - Use protection information and analysis for evidence-based programming and responses, ensure feedback to the population of concern and adapt responses accordingly.
 - Design responses which provide a continuum (nexus approach), strengthening the resilience of the population of concern. Responses are based on a protection risk analysis. Sector-specific responses are developed in protection, food security and economic recovery, coordination, peacebuilding, and armed violence reduction.
 - Work in complementarity with and to strengthen existing stakeholders, technical services, and community-based mechanisms.
 - Accompany communities in their resilience mechanisms by adaptation to the context and strategies for non-engagement and peaceful resolution of conflicts.
- The project highlighted the added value of doing action research in validating operational organisations' observations through independent and rigorous research. As a result, the research has led to a greater understanding of the drivers of protection risks in the region. It has also led to a more integrated approach and a stronger community engagement approach. According to SIPRI, the research has led to pushing the humanitarian agenda towards:
 - Improved consideration for the agenda of localization and community engagement.
 - Improved consideration to engage humanitarian assistance in the nexus and strengthening actions to address root causes, and solutions to displacement, through development and peace responses.
 - Increased consideration of the "youth" age group (15/24) and an intersectional approach to gender, age, and marginality to address protection risks.
 - Increased recognition of the role of local stakeholders and services as main actors of the humanitarian response, and their engagement to address root causes and solutions.
 - Increased engagement between the humanitarian sectors, in particular Peacebuilding stakeholders, Economic Recovery sector (Food security, livelihood, social protection systems) and protection response.
 - Increased investment in Accountability towards Affected Populations (AAP).

- The findings from this research were presented at a side event of the Sahel Ministerial roundtable with a focus on the importance of documenting the protection situation and measuring changes, to the humanitarian cluster in Dakar (sept. 2021) during the Stockholm Security Conference (SIPRI 2021) and in Dakar, Ouagadougou, Bamako and Niamey (nov-dec 2022) to humanitarian actors, researchers and civil society organisations.
- Extraordinary sessions of the protection cluster were organised in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger to present the results of the research as well as continuous interaction and dialogue with the protection clusters throughout the research.

OUTPUTS

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- DRC (No date) From ultra-poor to self-reliant: A youth-focused poverty alleviation model in Central Sahel.
- DRC (no date) Prevenir: prevention and resilience for the future.