Outcome Evaluation of the Implementation of the Protection of Civilians Mandate by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)

20 May 2024

IED-24-012

Inspection and Evaluation Division

INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

Function

"The Office shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the programmes and legislative mandates of the Organization. It shall conduct programme evaluations with the purpose of establishing analytical and critical evaluations of the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, examining whether changes therein require review of the methods of delivery, the continued relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates as they may be reflected in the approved budgets and the medium-term plan of the Organization;" ([General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B](#)).

Project team members include:
Aidan Connolly, Team Leader
Daisy Rebecca Nakasi, Team Member

Contact Information

OIOS-IED Contact Information:
phone: +1 212-963-8148; fax: +1 212-963-1211; email: ied@un.org

Patty Chang, Chief of Section
Tel: +1 212-963-1736, e-mail: changp@un.org

Demetra Arapakos, Deputy Director
Tel: +1 917-367-6033, e-mail: arapakos@un.org

Yee Woo Guo, Director
Tel: +1 917-367-3674, e-mail: guoy@un.org

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Summary

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) Inspection and Evaluation Division (IED) conducted an outcome evaluation to determine the relevance, effectiveness, and coherence of the implementation of the Protection of Civilians (POC) mandate by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), covering the period 2017 to June-2023.

Following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in 2011, UNISFA was established as an interim security force in Abyei until the two governments reach an agreement on the final status of Abyei. Twelve years later, the final status has not been determined but the mandate of UNISFA had been renewed each year. Among the mandated tasks of UNISFA was the protection of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.

During the evaluation period, UNISFA operationalized a whole-of-mission POC approach through three Tiers according to the mission components and in alignment with the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) POC policy. The mission POC strategy was well aligned with its mandate, focusing on the needs and priorities of women, youth, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), the two governments, Agencies Funds and Programmes (AFPs), and some Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). However, the strategy lacked clarity in determining threat assessments, adapting implementation measures to changing security dynamics, assessing lessons learned and identifying measurable results.

Convened peace conferences resulting in signed agreements achieved the most tangible outcomes, whereas the provision of physical protection and supporting rule of law institutions yielded mixed results. Additionally, the increase in POC incidents during the transition from a single to a multinational peacekeeping mission in 2022 detracted from the overall effective implementation of the POC mandate.

UNISFA coherently implemented the POC mandate with relevant internal mission components and external stakeholders. Internally, collaborative efforts were observed across the three components in joint patrols, convening conferences, and supporting traditional justice mechanisms. Externally, convening conferences in collaboration with AFPs and an NGO and with the participation of government administrative representatives, traditional leaders, and local authorities was most noted. However, gaps remained in collaborative threat analysis and response among mission components and enhanced engagement with the AFPs and NGOs.

Regarding integrating cross-cutting issues, UNISFA mainstreamed gender and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) issues within its POC efforts. Nevertheless, more targeted and inclusive approaches were warranted, particularly in addressing the concerns of youth, PWDs, human rights issues, or climate-related risks.

To further strengthen the relevance, effectiveness, and coherence of implementing the POC mandate by UNISFA, OIOS makes five important recommendations to UNISFA with the support of DPO to; lean into the POC strategy by conducting comprehensive consultations when revising the strategy and make further improvements to close identified gaps between the draft and final version; amplify unarmed approaches to POC by prioritizing the strengthening of initiatives by the civilian and UNPOL components; developing a comprehensive community engagement Standard Operating Procedure (SOP); conceptualizing the Community Protection Committees (CPC) through the development of a CPC strategy; and centralizing the early warning system.

I. Introduction

1.   The overall objective of this Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluation was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, effectiveness, and coherence of implementation of the Protection of Civilians (POC) mandate by United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The evaluation topic emerged from a programme-level risk assessment described in the evaluation inception paper produced at the outset of the evaluation.[1] The evaluation conforms with the norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations System.[2]

2.   UNISFA management comments were sought on the draft report and considered in the final report. UNISFA management response is included in Annex I.

II. Background and Context

3.   UNISFA was established on 27 June 2011 by Security Council resolution 1990 as an interim six-month security force to respond to the renewed violence, escalating tensions, and population displacement in the Abyei Administrative Area (AAA) as Southern Sudan prepared to declare its independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011. The creation of UNISFA came about seven days[3] after the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) reached an agreement[4] in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to demilitarize Abyei and allow the deployment of an interim security force composed of Ethiopian troops. The deployment of Ethiopian troops one month later took place significantly faster than other peacekeeping operations.[5]

4.   UNISFA was mandated to monitor and verify the redeployment of any armed forces, specifically Sudan and South Sudanese forces from the Abyei area, participate in relevant Abyei area bodies as stipulated in the agreement, provide demining assistance and technical advice, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and free movement of humanitarian personnel, strengthen the capacity of the Abyei Police Service (APS) and when necessary, provide security for the oil infrastructure in the Abyei area.[6]

5.   Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council authorized UNISFA to take the necessary action to (a) protect UNISFA personnel, facilities, installation, and equipment; (b) protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations, and equipment; (c) ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel, humanitarian personnel, and members of the Joint Military Observers Committee and Joint Military Observer Teams; (d) without prejudice to the responsibilities of the relevant authorities, to protect civilians in the Abyei area under imminent threat of physical violence; (e) protect the

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[1] Inception Paper Assignment No: IED-2023-015.
[2] United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016.
[3] Year in Review: United Nations Peace Operations 2012, Page 22-23. https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789210562195
[4] Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area, 20 June 2011.
[5] Kaleab, *From security provider to a security risk? The abrupt withdrawal of Ethiopia's a decade-long peacekeeping mission in UNISFA*, page 74.
[6] S/RES/1990

Abyei area from incursions by unauthorized elements, as defined in the agreement; and (f) ensure security in the Abyei area.

6.   The mandate of UNISFA was renewed multiple times over the last 12 years, and the Security Council maintained the same mandated tasks and operational areas, except for a reduction in troop size noted between 2017 and 2021[7] and the reconfiguration from a single Troop Contributing Country (TCC) to a multinational peacekeeping force with 8 TCCs in 2022.[8]

7.   The security situation in Abyei commonly referred to as the "box" remained dire, characterized by incidents of killings, shootings, cattle rustling, and violence against women, including rape, migration-related incidents, and the continued presence of armed elements.[9] Between 2017 and 2023, communal violence and criminal activities involving the Ngok-Dinka, Misseriya, Twic-Dinka and Nuer communities accounted for most of the violence in Abyei, commonly triggered by territorial and resource-sharing disputes. The ongoing conflict in Sudan[10] also affected the security situation, notably through an influx of displaced persons from Sudan into Abyei.[11] Consequently, the humanitarian situation remained severe, with 280,000 individuals needing humanitarian assistance as of November 2023[12] compared to the 300,000 residents.[13]

III.   Methodology

8.   The evaluation covered the period from January 2017 to June 2023 to align with the period that reflected changes in the threat dimension in Abyei, leading to a reduction in troop size by the Security Council. This timeframe offered valuable insights into the implementation of the POC mandate from both the perspectives of single and multinational TCCs and how the transition period was managed. The evaluation focused on efforts undertaken by the substantive mission components (military, police, and civilian) per the POC Tiers[14] and its collaboration efforts with partners.

9.   The evaluation employed mixed methods for data collection and triangulated the data to increase the validity of the findings. The following qualitative and quantitative data sources were used.

- **Document Reviews:** of over 600 documents, including Security Council resolutions, the Secretary-General reports, Budget Performance Reports, mission concept, POC strategy, policy, and handbook,[15] End of Assignment Reports, After Action Reports, code cables, Daily and Weekly Situation Reports (D/WSR), section work plans and activity reports, Enterprise

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[7] Resolutions with a reduction in troop size: Resolution 2352 (2017) reduces troop size from 5326 to 4791, Resolution 2445 (2018) reduces troop size from 4791 to 4140, Resolution 2469 (2019) reduces troop size from 4140 to 3550, and Resolution2609 (2021) reduces troop size from 3550 to 3250.

[8] Ghana, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Viet Nam, Nepal, China, and Nigeria.
https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unisfa

[9] Deadly violence in the disputed Abyei Area, ACLED, March 2023 https://acleddata.com/2023/03/17/sudan-march-2023-situation-update-deadly-violence-in-the-disputed-abyei-area/

[10] The war in Sudan broke out on 15 April 2023.

[11] S/2023/777

[12] OCHA: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, South Sudan (November 2023).

[13] Concordis International: 2023 annual review.

[14] Tier I: Protection through dialogue and engagement, Tier II: Provision of physical protection, and Tier III: Establishment of a protective environment.

[15] Department of Peace Operations (DPO) 2023 POC strategy and 2020 POC handbook.

Risks Management (ERM) Registers, reviews by the Office for Peacekeeping Strategic Partnerships (OPSP) and signed agreements.

- **Key Informant and Group Interviews:** 66 interviews reaching 180 individuals (57 women and 123 men), comprising staff from UNISFA, United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ), Agencies Funds and Programmes (AFPs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), traditional leaders, government representatives, youth groups, women groups, as well as members of the Community Protection Committees (CPC), Joint Protection Committee (JPC), and Joint Community Peace Committee (JCPC).

- **Secondary Data Analysis:** of 397 D/WSR to assess reported incidents and responses by UNISFA.[16] A POC incident matrix was populated according to predefined criteria, including incident date, type, location, involved ethnic groups, fatalities, injuries, cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), rape, response time frame, and component. Subsequently, analysis was conducted to identify trends and pertinent contextual factors.

- **Direct Observations:** Including attending Mission Leadership Team (MLT) meetings, conducting site visits to the Sector TCCs during data collection and visiting the Abyei detention facility. These firsthand experiences provided insights into operational dynamics and conditions on the ground.

Limitations

10.   Limited external publications about the mission or its activities constrained the ability to triangulate findings beyond the data collection methods utilized. Few research studies focused on the mission and the region, and databases like the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) had limited coverage of conflict events.[17]

11.   The reviewed D/WSRs were taken at face value. Instances of limited information on any of the predefined criteria were noted in the "notes" section of the matrix.

12.   Engagements with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) during the field visit were hindered by the outbreak of violence on 29 September 2023 and the mission compound lockdown.

IV.   Evaluation Results

RELEVANCE

Overall Result 1: The mission POC strategy was well-aligned with its mandate, focusing on the needs and priorities of certain vulnerable groups, the two governments, and partners, but could be strengthened in terms of responsiveness to new security threats.

13.   The revised draft POC strategy[18] cascaded from the mandate to inform the mission concept and operationalized a whole-of-mission POC approach through three tiers according to mission components and in alignment with the 2023 POC policy and the 2020 POC handbook. The strategy also acknowledged relevant Security Council resolutions on POC, Women Peace and

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[16] Data from 2019 was omitted due to the limited availability of situation reports (only covering 5 months), which could have skewed the findings.
[17] ACLED had only 129 events compared to 1,352 incidents from the D/WSR for 6 years and covered only 28 of the 95 locations in Abyei.
[18] The revision process of the 2020-2022 POC strategy was ongoing by October 2023.

Security (WPS), and Youth Peace and Security (YPS), the unique challenge of operating in the AAA, and the changing security and conflict dynamics.

14. The largest component, the military focused on physical protection (Tier II), including robust and proactive patrolling in locations where civilians were under threat. The second largest component, the police had the widest coverage (encompassing Tiers I, II, and III) in strengthening CPC capacity, rolling out community-oriented policing, neighborhood watch, and confidence-building patrols as part of the preventative and deterrence strategy, as well as providing training and awareness programs in three sectors (North, Center, and South). The smallest component, the civilian focused on Tiers I and III, engaging in preventive and pre-emptive measures of political dialogues with the GoS and the Government of South Sudan (GoSS), international stakeholders, consultations with local administration, and community liaison to support inter-communal dialogues as part of efforts to create a secure and stable environment. The roles and responsibilities of key actors in the mission were clearly defined, with the strategy also identifying actors, stakeholders, and beneficiaries, emphasizing the need to engage with them.

15. However, the draft strategy was unclear on (1) how threat assessment would be determined and prioritized within the broad coordination of different components and sections, early warning mechanisms, and community engagement; (2) how the components would adapt outlined implementation measures based on the changing security dynamics; (3) how the lessons learned assessments would be conducted; and (4) identifying measurable results that can be systematically benchmarked to monitor impact.

Sub result 1.a: The depth and comprehensiveness of consultations across vulnerable groups varied, with the needs and priorities of women considered the most, followed by youth and IDPs, but with a notable omission in the concerns of Persons with disabilities (PWDs).

16. UNISFA considered the needs and priorities of women as a vulnerable group through the WPS agenda. The mission prioritized inclusive and meaningful engagement of women, organizations for women, and their immediate and long-term protection needs. UNISFA convened local peace conferences where women participated, such as the migration and traditional leader conferences, and facilitated community dialogues empowering women to advocate for their rights. The mission also encouraged women to join community protection structures; for example, 181 women were involved in the CPC, four in the JPC, and 30 women formed the Joint Female Peace Committee[19] (JFPC) at Amiet Market.

17. Additionally, women participated in awareness campaigns leading to celebrations of International Women's Day and the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. The culmination of different activities broadened their participation in civic space through the appointment of a Gender Adviser to the Southern Abyei local administration[20] and the appointment of female judges to 11 of the 13 Ngok Dinka traditional courts.[21] In establishing protective environments, UNISFA conducted gender-responsive patrols targeting men, women, and children and advocated for sensitization and training on SGBV and human rights. In 2020, UNISFA deployed a monitoring and data collection tool for SGBV and established gender desks within the community to monitor and report on SGBV cases. To some extent, the results of such

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[19] The Joint Female Peace Committee only focuses on issues relevant to Amiet Market.
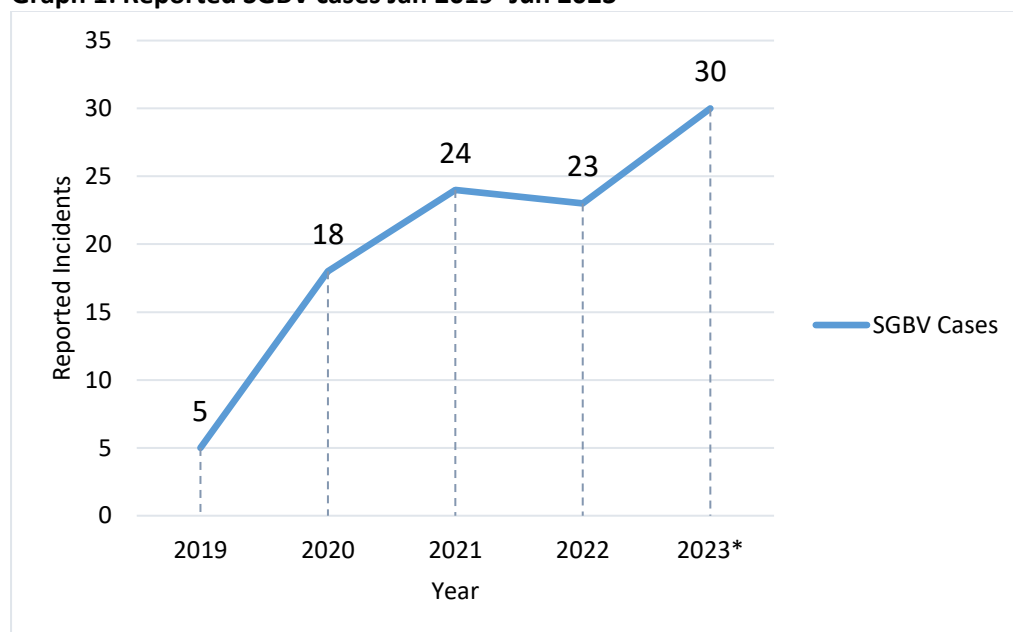[20] S/2021/383 para 31
[21] S/2022/760 para 43

activities led to increased reporting on SGBV cases[22] (Graph 1) and the relocation of the Mul Mul market of Abyei town following an SGBV case to foster more stable environments for women.[23]

18.   The needs and priorities of the youth were considered based on the YPS pillar of protection. UNISFA involved youth in community-level engagements like migration conferences, grassroots security meetings, and awareness campaigns on topics like peaceful co-existence, security and personal protection, early marriage, health promotion, mine clearance, and risk reduction to ensure the expression of their concerns and involvement in decision-making processes. Youth participated in peacebuilding events like sports tournaments for peace, leading to the observance of International Youth Day, and formed part of the CPCs. Nonetheless, some interviewed youth expressed dissatisfaction with the engagement strategy of the mission, describing it as extractive and organization-centric rather than fostering open two-way discussions to address their challenges collaboratively.

19.   Regarding IDPs, the mission provided force protection to ensure their secure return to Abyei and safety within the three established IDP camps. Despite the urge by the Secretary-General to ensure effective protection and assistance for PWDs,[24] the mission did not involve PWDs in most initiatives, except for consultative meetings on WPS with the Abyei Women Association, in which women with disabilities participated.

Graph 1: Reported SGBV cases Jan 2019- Jun 2023

Source: UNISFA Secretary-General Reports.
*Only six months

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[22] There were no records of reported SGBV cases in 2017 and 2018.
[23] S/2021/383 para 33
[24] S/2019/373 para 49 and 63(c)

Sub result 1.b: UNISFA considered and supported the priorities of both Governments and local administrative institutions through high-level and local-level engagements. Shared peacebuilding priorities with other partners were considered through jointly convened pre- and post-migration conferences, community dialogues, and JCPC meetings.

20.   The priorities of the two governments were reflected in their commitments in the 2011 Agreements,[25] including establishing joint institutions like the APS, border demarcation, and the final status of Abyei. To consider these priorities, UNISFA engaged the two governments, African Union (AU), the Office of the Special Envoy of the Horn of Africa (SEHoA), Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC), and the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM), to ensure the implementation of those commitments, the resumption of dialogue to address pressing security and humanitarian issues jointly, and the provision of the necessary political support for peace and reconciliation efforts between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. In 2017, when the AJOC had not met since 2015, the mission engaged with the AU and SEHoA to convene extraordinary meetings to ensure continued dialogue on issues of Abyei.[26] When the AJOC hit a hiatus,[27] mission leadership met separately with the committee co-chairs in Juba and Khartoum to encourage each party to meet their commitments and promote the resumption of the AJOC. Together with the AU and SEHoA, the mission ensured that the parties met to discuss the final status of Abyei through the JPSM.[28]

21.   At the local level, the priorities of the local leaders on peaceful co-existence among communities were addressed through the maintenance of a robust military posture and engagements with the Chief Administrator, the Ngok-Dinka Paramount Chief, and the Chiefs of the nine chiefdoms, the AJOC Sudanese Co-chair and Paramount Chief of the Diffra Administrative Area to understand the concerns of their communities and ensure their involvement in POC initiatives. Mission leadership and the Community Liaison Office (CLO) staff met with the community leadership[29] to address community concerns collaboratively, discussing actionable steps to be taken by each party. Occasionally, the mission sought the Chiefs in the de-escalation of community tensions. The peace partners (UNISFA, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and Concordis International) met monthly with the Abyei Peace Minister to discuss, plan, and implement social cohesion initiatives like migration conferences and weekly JCPC meetings at Amiet Market. The mission also convened the joint traditional leaders conference[30] to facilitate dialogue between the leaders of the two major communities,[31] addressing key concerns essential for achieving peace.

22.   The priorities of AFPs and NGOs[32] included protecting civilians from a humanitarian perspective by providing essential services and conducting peacebuilding initiatives. Consequently, UNISFA provided force protection to humanitarian actors to ensure access to high-risk areas to execute their tasks and facilitated the transportation of humanitarian staff and

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[25] 20 June 2011 agreement, 29 June 2011 agreement, and 30 July agreement.

[26] S/2017/312 para 13 and S/2017/649 para 21

[27] The AJOC has not reconvened since 2017.

[28] The JPSM has consistently met over the years (January 2023, May 2022, October 2021, September 2021, October 2020, February 2020, March 2019, and September 2018).

[29] The mission engaged the leaders of the Ngok-Dinka, Misseriya, Twic, and Nuer communities.

[30] 17-19 May 2022 in Entebbe, Uganda.

[31] Ngok-Dinka and Misseriya.

[32] As of August 2023, six United Nations Agencies and 16 national and international agencies provided humanitarian assistance in Abyei (S/2023/777 para 44).

commodities to Abyei. Shared peacebuilding priorities were achieved through jointly convened peace conferences, weekly JCPC meetings, dispute resolution training for CPCs, and the development of a joint peace agenda by the peace partners.

Sub Result 1.c: Responsiveness to changes in the political and contextual factors was limited, demonstrating challenges in adapting to evolving security threats.

23.   While the revised draft POC strategy highlighted some of the changing contextual and security dynamics, it did not capture the full scope and complexity of issues. From an implementation perspective, there was ambiguity about how different components would adapt their work in response to changing political and contextual factors.

24.   Despite POC being a central mission priority, knowledge of the existence of a POC strategy was fragmented across different levels at UNISFA. As of October 2023, the old strategy was a year out of date, and the review process to update it lacked a comprehensive consultative approach despite emphasis from the UNHQ POC unit to solicit feedback across staff and stakeholders. The approach to consultation at the mission was primarily limited to issuing emails to various sections and partners inviting feedback on the necessary revisions. There was limited understanding of how the revised draft strategy adapted to changes in contextual factors, as some interview respondents (58 per cent of UNISFA staff and 4 of the 6 AFPs) indicated not being involved during the revision process and struggled to articulate the difference between the old and new approaches. Other staff were unaware of the existence of a POC strategy (37 per cent). Only one respondent underscored changes in contextual risk factors, such as the shift from conflicts between two tribes to broader tribal tensions and the transition from a single to multinational TCCs, as key modifications in the revised strategy.

25.   As stipulated in the prior and revised draft strategies, mission staff were required to incorporate POC responsibilities in their work plans. However, given the fragmented knowledge of the existence of the POC strategy, assessment of the degree of POC integration was hindered by the absence of a work plan, a failure to submit work plans, or a submission of outdated work plans.[33] Despite these obstacles, weekly Monday morning meetings with section heads on POC-related discussions served as a collaborative platform for components, facilitating dialogue and offering strategic guidance for agreed-upon actions.

EFFECTIVENESS

Overall Result 2: Convened peace conferences resulting in signed agreements achieved the most tangible outcomes, whereas the provision of physical protection, support to the rule of law institutions, and management of the transition period yielded mixed results. While a clear mandate was crucial, structural limitations and capacity gaps hindered successful implementation.

Sub Result 2.a: The engagement of local communities to convene peace conferences, leading to signed agreements to address tensions, has been the most tangible outcome of all POC objectives, whereas other aspects of monitoring and reporting threats to civilians to provide physical protection and supporting rule of law institutions to create an enabling environment yielded mixed results.

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[33] These reflected POC incorporated POC responsibilities.

Tier I: Protection through dialogue and engagement

26.   Within Tier I, UNISFA undertook conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution efforts to foster inter-communal reconciliation and avert violence through dialogues. Through its good offices, the mission convened dialogues with the two governments, operating under the premise that progress on the political front would contribute to long-term conflict mitigation, as detailed in paragraph 20. Despite these endeavors, the engagements did not result in the realization of commitments outlined in the 2011 agreements[34] or any advancements concerning the final status of Abyei. The mission convened conferences for both pre-and post-migration and with traditional leaders at the local level. These conferences provided communities with a platform for dialogue and addressing various issues. Some conferences resulted in signed agreements, while others did not yield agreements due to disagreements on various issues (Graph 4).[35]

27.   Agreed-upon issues included facilitating peaceful transhumance, cessation of hostilities, freedom of movement, acceptance of Misseriya seeking treatment in Abyei, reconvening a restructured JCPC, engaging in inter-community dialogue, and promoting peace by traditional leaders. Following the May 2022 traditional leaders conference between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, no conflicts were recorded between the two tribes for the remainder of that year. However, tensions resurfaced in 2023, leading to renewed conflicts between the two tribes. The observed rise in signed agreements in 2023 was attributed to sustained community engagements and the facilitation of conferences. Nevertheless, staff expressed apprehensions regarding the insufficient mechanisms within the mission for disseminating and monitoring the implementation of agreements. While the JCPC was instrumental in addressing breaches on the community side in a conciliatory manner or evoking the local blood money compensation for serious issues such as killings, there were no discernible mechanisms in place to hold the mission accountable for unimplemented actions.

Graph 2: Convened conferences and signed agreements (Jan 2017-Jun 2023)
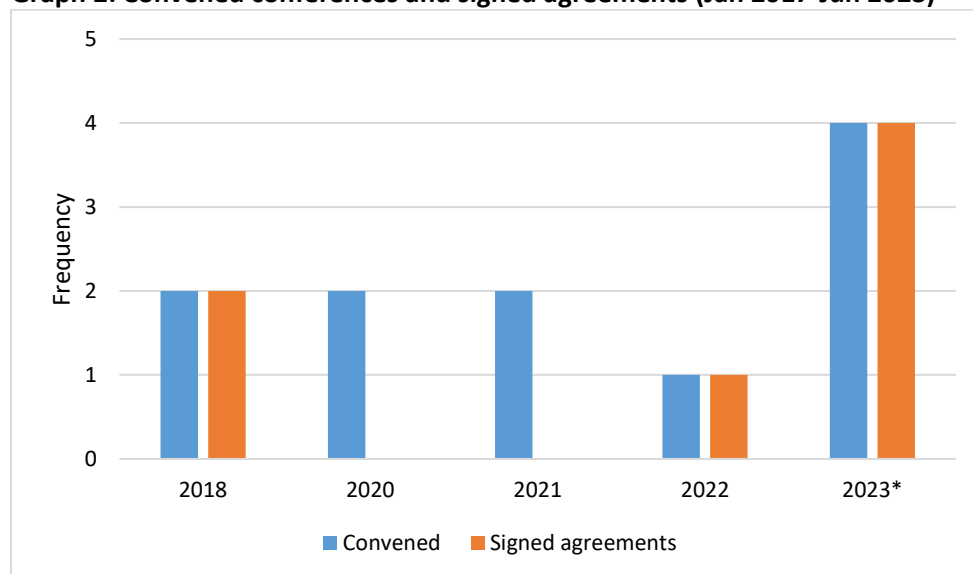
Source: UNISFA Secretary-General reports and signed agreements.
***Only six months**

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[34] Establishment of a joint administration, the Abyei Police Service, and withdrawal of armed forces from the two governments.
[35] There were no records of convened conferences in 2017.

Tier II: Provision of physical protection

28.   Given that the military component comprised approximately 90 per cent of the mission, UNISFA had a heavy reliance on a militarized approach to POC. Despite the initially larger force size of Ethiopian TCC with its Contingent Owned Equipment (COE), the reduction in troop size and transition to a multinational peacekeeping force left forces with limited COE[36] to deal with the same area of responsibility within rapidly changing security dynamics. Recognizing the constraints of limited operational force capacity to cover all potential risk areas, Tier II of the POC strategy called for the concentration of forces in high-risk areas and conducting patrols in and near flash points and hotspot areas to serve as a deterrence. In both troop configurations, UNISFA identified patterns of high-risk areas to station troops and the United Nations Police (UNPOL) where they could anticipate, respond to, and plan for protection risks.

29.   The collection of information on the ongoing violence and emerging threats and the ability to identify threats were translated into consistent same-day responses to incidents (Graph 3). However, that did not result in a reduction in the number or nature of incidents (Graph 4),[37] and with the recent influx of diverse armed actors and the rise in violence attributed to crime, efficacy in the provision of physical protection diminished when faced with the need to respond to multiple POC incidents occurring at the same time.

Graph 3: Mission response time to POC incidents (Jan 2017 – Jun 2023)
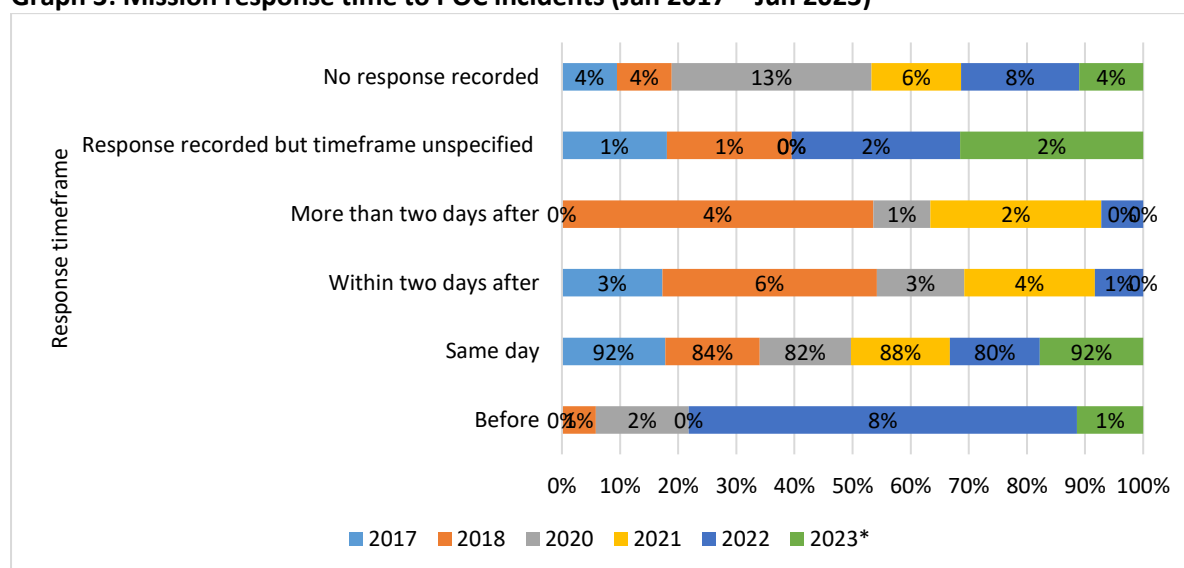
Source: OIOS analysis of UNISFA D/WSRs.
*Only six months

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[36] Ghanaian Battalion at 56 per cent and the Indian Battalion at 30.5 per cent as of April 2023.
[37] POC incidents were classified based on the mission United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) classification. **Armed conflict:** Recurrent armed attacks by armed groups or movement of armed men. **Crime:** Livestock rustling, livestock killing, murder, road ambush, abductions and kidnapping, armed robbery, rape or sexual assault, theft, shooting, physical assault, facility intrusion, or illegal possession of firearms. **Civil unrest:** Recurrent and sometimes violent and non-violent demonstrations by locals. **Communal conflict:** explicitly mentioned inter- and intra-communal conflicts. **Hazards:** Fire hazards, road traffic accidents, Unexploded Ordnances (UXO), and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW).

Graph 4: POC incidents (Jan 2017 – Jun 2023)
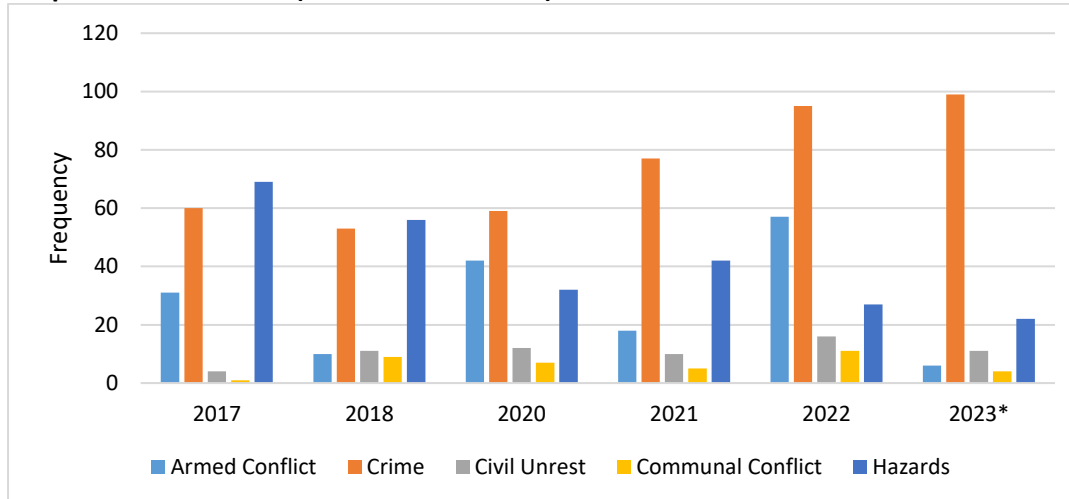
30.   Susceptible areas were targeted for increased patrolling visibility by utilizing early warning and peacekeeping intelligence. An Early Warning System (EWS) was instituted in 2018, and a draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) developed in 2021 to improve information collection and provide quick responses. Community structures such as traditional leaders, village heads, joint security committees, and others were relied upon for information gathering. However, the system operated decentralized, with separate channels for each mission component to receive community information. Data was then consolidated and triangulated at the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) for action by the military.

31.   Interviewees provided varying perspectives about the effectiveness of the EWS, with a majority considering it ineffective. Inefficiencies were attributed to a deficiency in equipment for CPCs, such as motorcycles, phones, and airtime, which are crucial for transmitting information. Challenges were attributed to bad road infrastructure, lack of fuel, and poor network connectivity. Additionally, there was a lack of acceptance of the mechanism in the northern sector of the box, with local leaders perceiving it as an intelligence-sharing platform, rendering it unacceptable. Likewise, the concept of CPC, integral to the EWS, experienced initial rejection in northern Abyei and was only embraced in early 2022.

32.   At the mission, its functionality was affected by the absence of an operational room with radios at the headquarters, a scarcity of language assistants for interpreting community messages, and a lack of integration with existing platforms like the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) and Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE), as initially envisioned in the draft EWS SOP. A review of reported incidents and the mission response rate within the D/WSRs indicated that despite patrols, a focus on hotspot areas, deployment of Temporary Operating Bases (TOBs), and the incorporation of heliborne reconnaissance for physical protection and deterrence against threats, there was no reduction in both incidents and civilian fatalities over the years (Graph 5) or a reduction in incidents in hotspot areas[38] (Graph 6).

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[38] Sector Centre includes Abyei and UNISFA HQ, Sector South includes Agok, and Sector North includes Diffra and Todach as identified hotspot areas by UNISFA.

Graph 5: POC incidents and fatalities (Jan 2017 – Jun 2023)
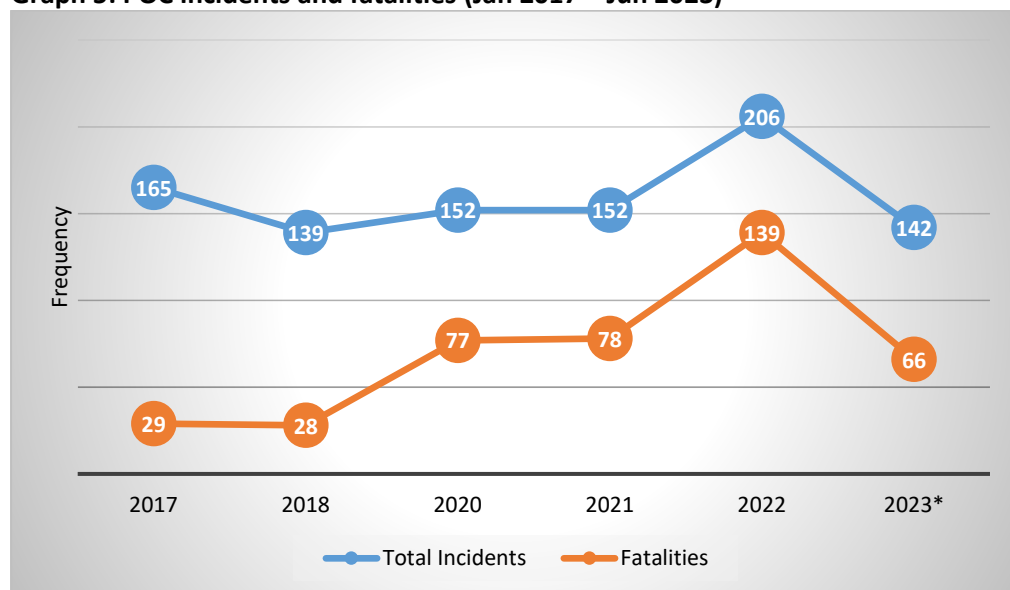
Source: OIOS analysis of UNISFA D/WSRs.
*Only six months

Graph 6: POC incidents in hotspot areas (Jan 2017-Jun 2023)
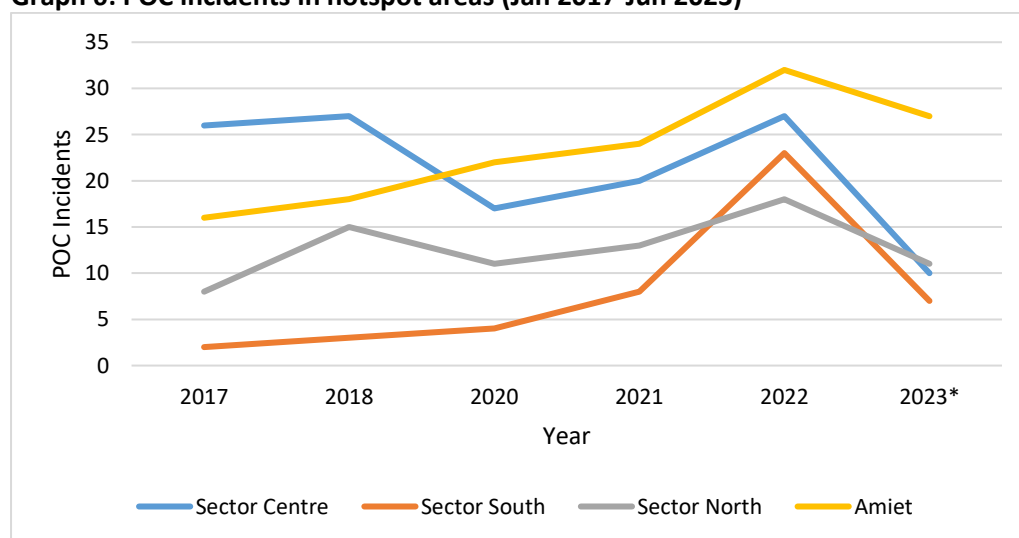
Source: OIOS analysis of UNISFA D/WSRs.
*Only six months

Tier III: Establishment of a protective environment

33.   In the absence of the APS and the continued challenges in deployment of Formed Police Units (FPUs) due to non-issuance of visas by Sudan, the mission trained the CPCs,[39] JPC and JCPC. This was done with the intention of strengthening their capacities to assist with the management of the law-and-order processes and ensure human and dignified treatment of suspects and detainees. Whereas there were no established criteria for selecting CPCs provided to the traditional leaders, the mission developed a code of conduct for CPCs in 2021. UNPOL reported

[39] CPCs were community volunteers selected by traditional leaders from different age groups and gender.

the existence of 1,223 profiled and vetted CPCs (181 female) and trained them and JCPC on various topics, including basic policing principles, crime prevention, making arrests, application of the Mandela principles in handling suspects, detention procedures, human rights, managing juveniles, conducting investigations, and sexual and gender-based violence.

34.   Approximately 53 training sessions were conducted since 2017, reaching 2,374 CPC participants (512 female) and 30 JCPC members, including those who had participated in refresher courses. Based on the provided training, the CPCs were expected to perform duties including foot patrols to monitor the villages and report security threats to UNPOL, making arrests, managing the three detention facilities (Abyei, Amiet, and Agok), correctional duties, traffic control, and general policing activities. All interviewees confirmed the performance of the said duties by the CPCs. Attempts to assess the effectiveness of the functions of CPCs reflected that 1) despite their existence, there was an increase in incidents of crime (Graph 7); 2) an assessment of trends in arrests was not possible as the mission only provided statistics for January 2022 to August 2023; 3) there were no records of the number of investigations conducted or correction services offered.

Graph 7: Crime Trends (Jan 2017 -Jun 2023)
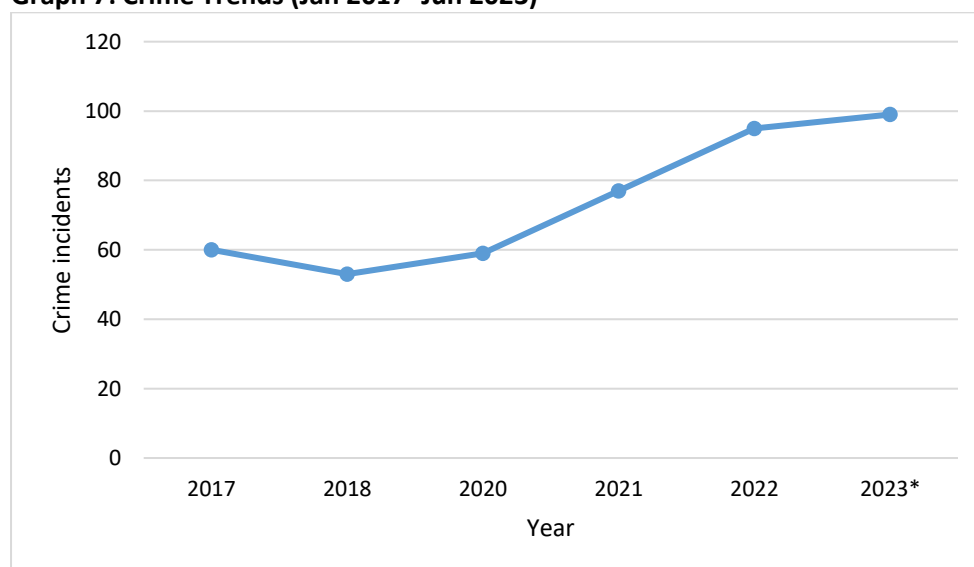
Source: OIOS analysis of UNISFA D/WSRs.
*Only six months

35.   While UNISFA provided equipment[40] to some CPCs to ease the execution of their duties, they experienced challenges including a lack of remuneration, inadequate policing equipment like handcuffs and batons, absence of uniforms for visibility, reliance on personal phones for incident reporting leading to confidentiality concerns during photo documentation, and vulnerability to attacks by suspects and detainees due to their unarmed status. Conversely, the mission lacked a well-defined engagement strategy for CPCs, outlining specifics such as recruitment processes, reporting structures, dismissal procedures, and plans for the group after determining the final status of Abyei. The inadequacy of trainers[41] at UNISFA posed a challenge, impeding the ability to provide sufficient training opportunities for the CPCs.

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[40] UNISFA provided 54 mobile phones, 19 bicycles, torches, gumboots, T-shirts, reflector jackets, and office furniture.
[41] The mission had one training officer by October 2023.

36.   The mission also supported the existing traditional justice mechanisms through training on customary court proceedings and advocacy for adherence to the international fair trial standards, promoting justice and observance of human rights, reviewing restorative justice principles, and aligning with national legal frameworks. The traditional justice mechanisms in Abyei included the JCPC at Amiet Common Market, Ngok Dinka traditional courts, a traditional court led by the Misseriya Traditional Chief, and the statutory court recognized by the Juba-appointed administration in Southern Abyei. Attempts to assess access to justice and settlement of reported cases by the traditional justice mechanisms to ascertain improvements over the years were unsuccessful as the mission did not document the number of reported cases and those adjudicated by the various mechanisms.

37.   Interviews with prosecutors in Abyei uncovered deficiencies in resources such as computers, translators, office stationery, and personnel, hindering proper documentation of handled cases. Challenges in accessing justice were identified, including weak traditional laws misaligned with international Human Rights Laws, prolonged detention of suspects due to a shortage of prosecutors and the absence of a judge, the lack of a unified criminal justice system, limited capacity of traditional courts, the reinstatement of "blood money compensation" as a dispute resolution method,[42] and the reluctance of the two governments to agree on handover procedures for suspects to their authorities, despite continuous engagement by the mission.

Sub Result 2.b: Despite endeavors to enhance the capacity of community mechanisms for POC, establish plans, and create a task force to oversee the transition from single to multinational TCC, the upsurge in POC incidents detracted from the overall effectiveness of managing the transition period.

38.   Between January and April 2022, UNISFA transitioned from a single country to a multi-national peacekeeping mission at the request of GoS.[43] To ensure the continued protection of civilians in the box, the mission had several exchanges with UNHQ to seek clarity on repatriation and redeployment plans to avoid protection gaps in the transition period. A transition task force was established at the mission to plan and oversee the reconfiguration. The mission and UNHQ developed a plan that included phased repatriation of Ethiopian troops and deployment of multinational troops while considering proper handover processes. Several community mechanisms that also supported the protection of civilians existed by the end of 2021, including 1,008[44] CPC members (193 female) in sectors south and center, the Joint Peace Committee, the joint traditional court at Amiet market to handle inert community conflicts, and customary courts where traditional leaders acted as de facto prosecutors, judges, and arbitrators.

39.   In anticipation of the commencement of the repatriation of the Ethiopian troops in February 2022, UNHQ provided a deployment schedule for TCCs, outlining the advanced arrival of the Ghanaian battalion in January and the advanced team from Pakistan in February. Both teams arrived in the stipulated months, and the last batch of Ethiopian troops departed Abyei on 10 April 2022. Despite the smaller troop size and limited COE of new troops, there was no period during the transition when the mission did not have troops present. The civilian component and the existing community structures remained unaffected.

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[42] S/2023/777 para 35
[43] S/2021/805 page 7
[44] Reported numbers in Secretary-General reports; S/2017/312, S/2017/870, S/2018/293, S/2018/923, S/2019/319, S/2020/1019, S/2021/383, and S/2021/881.

40.   Interview respondents held varying perceptions regarding transition management. While some staff praised the effective handling within limited resources, resulting in a more responsive force through troop reductions and asset removal, community members expressed dissatisfaction. Traditional leaders felt uninformed and excluded from the planning process. At the same time, community members expressed discontent with the influx of new tribes and SSPDF into the area during the transition, contributing to heightened crime and communal conflicts. Dissatisfaction also stemmed from the withdrawal of troops from key sites previously covered by the Ethiopian contingent.[45] A review of reported incidents and fatalities months before and after the transition period indicated a substantial surge in numbers, especially between February and May 2022 (Graph 8). February was marked by violent Twic and Ngok Dinka conflicts and the killing of Misseriya men at a border village. March was marked by an attack on Mading Tong villages, resulting in the death of 33 people. April was marked by several Misseriya armed men attacks on Noong, Amiet Market, Amiet Dinka Villages, and Leu village, and Twic attacks on Athony Company Operating Base (COB), Agok, Malual Aleu and Khadian villages marked May.

Graph 8: POC incidents and fatalities before and after transition
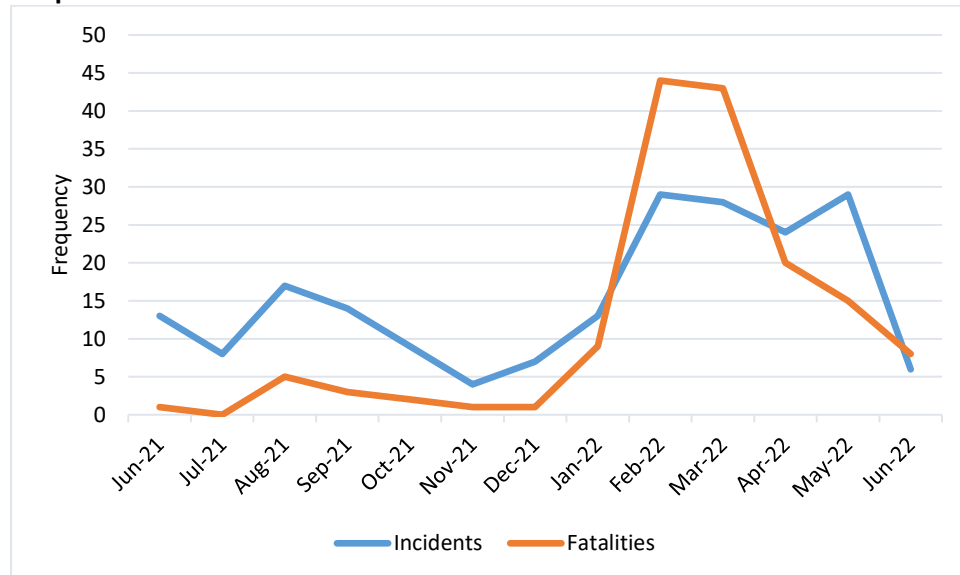
Source: OIOS analysis of UNISFA D/WSRs

Sub Result 2.c: The most significant factor that contributed to the achievement of POC implementation was a clear mandate. However, structural limitations, capacity gaps, and the lack of documentation of key results led to non-achievement.

41.   The successful implementation of POC was attributed to various internal and external factors. Internally, a clear mandate from the Security-Council established POC as a primary mission task, supported by the physical presence of troops across sectors and at hotspots. Community engagement initiatives and collaborative efforts with local leaders tailored approaches to address community needs. Introducing tools like the SGBV data collection tool and the community gender desks contributed to some extent to an increased reporting of SGBV cases. Externally, the cooperation of the two governments in attending joint meetings such as the JPSM and separate meetings with the mission facilitated agreements on key issues like reopening border corridors.

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[45] Villages per respondents were Athony, Ariik, Mading, Majak-kol, Akul, and Mading-Jokthiang.

42. Internal factors contributing to nonachievement included structural limitations marked by a lack of a substantive civilian component and staff. The mission lacked a dedicated POC Advisor or unit to focus primarily on POC initiatives. The staff designated as a POC focal point was primarily focused on supporting traditional justice mechanisms; hence, championing POC initiatives and ensuring collaborative efforts within the mission was secondary to their role. The mission also lacked a rule of law (RoL) expert to advise on matters of RoL. The limited availability of language assistants hampered communication with community members when reporting threats and in community engagement. Documentation of implemented initiatives, relevant statistics, and their contribution to achieving POC objectives was limited. The mission had recently operationalized CPAS and SAGE, but they were not fully functional or integrated with the EWS. Additionally, the insufficient training opportunities for staff on POC,[46] coupled with a lack of popularization of the POC strategy, hindered the development of a shared understanding within the mission and the limited capacity to de-weaponize the box, leading to increased arms proliferation.

43. External factors contributing to nonachievement included the presence of armed forces from both governments in the box, violating the 2011 agreement, and escalating tensions. Limited political will, shown by non-attendance of joint meetings and responses to mission note verbales, hampered progress in establishing joint institutions like the APS, border demarcation, the convening of AJOC meetings, and the final status of Abyei. These challenges also affected the implementation of the POC mandate, evidenced by visa non-issuance for FPUs, Individual Police Officers (IPOs), and the civilian deputy head of mission, non-authorization of the operationalization of Athony airstrip, and the failure to agree on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the handover of suspects. Poor road conditions during the rainy season impeded mobility and village coverage during patrols, and the conflict in Sudan affected the transportation of staff and equipment.

44. While protection through dialogue (Tier I) and building a protective environment (Tier III) have always been part of the DPO doctrine, unarmed approaches to POC were inadequately leveraged given its size, capacity, and degree of support from UNHQ to enable deeper links between the mission and communities. Unarmed approaches that should typically complement and further strengthen physical protection activities, such as the development of community networks for situation awareness, strategic communications to manage expectations about the level of United Nations protection and identify and counter mis/disinformation, empowerment of local stakeholders, identification of entry points to reduce violence and violence conducive attitudes of potential perpetrators of violence against civilians, as well as the management of expectations remained relatively weak.

COHERENCE

Overall Result 3: Implementing the POC mandate at UNISFA was coherent with relevant internal and external stakeholders, yet gaps remained in threat analysis, response, and enhanced engagement with the AFPs and NGOs.

Sub Result 3.a: Collaborative efforts were observed across the three components in joint patrols, convening conferences, and supporting traditional justice mechanisms. However, gaps in threat

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[46] One training on POC was noted in February 2020 for staff from the military, UNPOL, civilians, and AFPs. However, the training report does not specify how many people were trained. Including a POC session in the orientation training of TCCs was also mentioned without providing the actual number of trainings conducted or troops trained.

identification, analysis, and response, as well as the development of the POC strategy, required more collaboration and integration.

45.   Collaborative efforts across mission components were noted in different POC initiatives, including the co-location of the military, UNPOL, CLO, and military observers in all sectors that facilitated joint patrols and community interactions. This demonstrated a synergetic response to POC threats that were coordinated through weekly planning meetings at the COBs. Similarly, POC focal points were appointed in all sectors, convening monthly to discuss and strategize POC-related issues. One notable outcome was the agreement to establish POC sites in each sector, offering shelter to civilians during crises. At the mission headquarters, Sunday mission leadership team meetings and Monday Force Commander briefing meetings focused on POC offered an opportunity for all components to brief on undertaken initiatives and challenges and receive direction from the Head of the mission. Additionally, CLO, UNPOL, and the military collaborated in convening conferences.

46.   Nevertheless, shortcomings were identified in collaborative endeavors among the mission components, as revealed in staff interviews. Civilian staff highlighted a predominantly military-centric approach to POC implementation, with each component having different perspectives on best approaches and the weekly leadership meeting, offering limited space for open discussions and hindering collaborative decision-making on threat identification, analysis[47], and response strategies. On the military side, competition concerns were raised between the TCCs and observers, and the unclear delineation of roles between JOC and U3 led to duplication of initiatives. The fragmented approach to the EWS and limited information sharing among components hindered the possibilities of collaborative approaches to response initiatives. Furthermore, the segmented approach to revising the POC strategy, where each component revised its section independently, underscored deficiencies in developing unified implementation approaches.

47.   A review of collaborative efforts in response to reported incidents in the D/WSR indicated that the most prevalent type of response was the provision of physical protection (Graph 9). The military component predominantly conducted operational responses within Tier II, involving troop deployment to confront perpetrators, returning fire, and intensifying patrols. Only 1.5 per cent of responses demonstrated initiatives spanning the three tiers, indicating a collaborative approach involving all mission components. From the reviewed D/WSR, it was observed that response initiatives aligned to Tiers I and III, primarily led by the civilian and UNPOL components, tended to be conducted before or after an incident.

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[47] The Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC) was established in November 2022.

Graph 9: Response type to POC incidents over the years
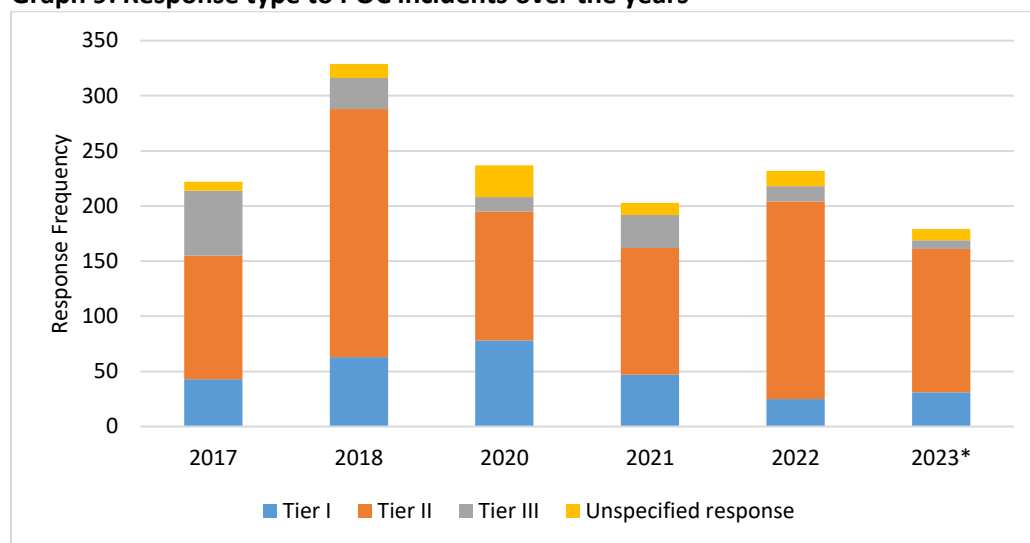
Source: OIOS analysis of UNISFA D/WSRs.
*Only six months

Sub Result 3.b: UNISFA consistently exhibited a commitment to collaborate with host government authorities, traditional leaders, and local authorities over the years. Yet, the depth of collaboration with AFPs and NGOs was limited to a few humanitarian actors and an NGO, leading to a shared desire among various stakeholders for enhanced engagement.

48.   Collaboration with the two government administrative representatives, traditional leaders, and local authorities was evident through the convened peace and migration conferences and the weekly JCPC meetings. In the central and southern sectors, the mission CLO section collaborated with the South Sudanese-appointed Peace Minister to organize migration conferences coordinated through monthly peace partners meetings. Periodically, engagements with the paramount Chief and Chiefs of the nine chiefdoms of the Ngok Dinka community were held to apprise them of the security situation, strategize for conferences, and seek their involvement in the cessation of hostilities. In the northern part of the box, the Chief Administrator, AJOC executive secretary, and the Nasar (Misseriya Paramount chief) based in Muglad were continuously consulted on community engagement initiatives. Given the exclusive responsibility of the mission to secure the area, no duplications were observed in security initiatives provided by the mission or the two governments.

49.   Collaboration with AFPs and NGOs was mainly observed through convening pre- and post-migration conferences, community dialogues, and weekly JCPC meetings with peace partners. Other initiatives included conducting community outreach to launch the 16 days of activism and commemoration of International Women's Day with IOM and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2021, respectively. UNISFA and IOM jointly supported restructuring the traditional court system. In 2022, UNISFA and IOM collaborated on training community-based early-warning committees. Between 2022 and 2023, four coordination meetings were held between UNISFA, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), IOM, and the South Sudanese authorities to aid the efforts led by the GoSS in support of rapprochement between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities. Additionally,

the mission collaborated with the United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) in Sudan and South Sudan to develop the Abyei joint programme in 2022 to address community needs.

50.   Excluding IOM, FAO, and Concordis International, there were shallow forms of collaborative initiatives with other AFPs, and NGOs reported by the mission. While the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) represented all AFPs and NGOs in the weekly mission meetings, its involvement was perceived as minimal, lacking meaningful exchange and falling short in terms of including the views of those organizations and joint planning. However, in fulfillment of its other mandate task, the mission often supported AFPs and international NGOs in transporting humanitarian workers and commodities by air and providing force protection to deliver their tasks in high-risk areas safely. There was no observed duplication of initiatives between the mission and the AFPs/NGOs, considering that shared priorities on peacebuilding were implemented in collaboration.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Overall Result 4: UNISFA mainstreamed gender and SGBV issues within its POC efforts. Nevertheless, more targeted and inclusive approaches, particularly in addressing the concerns of youth, persons with disabilities, human rights issues, or climate-related risks, are warranted.

51.   Gender was mainstreamed as a cross-cutting issue in mission initiatives, encompassing the identification of gender-based threats, monitoring, training, and sensitization of SGBV, the collection of gender-disaggregated data, as well as the inclusion of women in peace processes, local dialogues, and traditional justice systems as highlighted in sub-result 1.a. For example, during the Traditional Leaders Peace Conference in 2022, the mission advocated for the inclusion of women by organizing a symposium and emphasizing the importance of involving young women. However, the inclusion of women relative to men in different initiatives was far from parity, and a more comprehensive consideration of the intersectionality between gender and POC has yet to take effect.

52.   On other cross-cutting issues such as youth, apart from sub-result 1.a., the mission continued these efforts by collaborating with the University of Juba to engage the Abyei Youth Union in developing a five-year strategic peace plan, fostering collaboration between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka youth. However, on the cross-cutting issue of PWDs, the mission did not have a specific strategy for engaging and their participation was limited to one initiative.

53.   Human rights and POC are mutually reinforcing and inextricably interlinked. Human rights norms, principles, actors, and activities create sustainable protective environments meant to bridge critical gaps in POC during transitions, yet deepening collaboration and coordination across mission components and strengthening human rights processes beyond purely counting activities to ensure a more meaningful engagement between the mission, local authorities, and communities proved difficult. UNISFA experienced challenges monitoring, investigating, and documenting human rights violations and abuses within communities over the years due to the non-issuance of a visa to a human rights expert. Meanwhile, UNPOL and CLO incorporated topics on respect for human rights in their training and engagement with the CPC, JPC, JCPC, and traditional courts. UNPOL also monitored human rights violations at the three detention facilities and advised the detention wardens on compliance with International human rights standards. In February 2023, a human rights officer was deployed to the mission.

54.   Whereas climate-related risks play a crucial role in shaping the vulnerabilities, natural resource use, and well-being of civilian populations in Abyei, limited evidence was provided to demonstrate the integration of climate-related risks into protection efforts. The mission mentioned having distinct troop deployment plans tailored for the rainy season, a period marked by impaired force mobility and challenges in protecting civilians vulnerable and at risk of climate-induced extreme weather events and inaccessible areas. Road maintenance to ease troop movement during the rainy season was also mentioned.

V. Conclusion

55.   In conclusion, achieving the POC mandate requires a whole of mission, integrated and coordinated approach, intertwining the concerted endeavors of all mission components, and fostering effective collaboration with AFPs while considering contextual changes for comprehensive analysis and planning. To fulfill the POC objectives at UNISFA, deeper integration of approaches and strengthened capacity for unarmed approaches to POC are imperative to transcend reliance on the use of force for POC to achieve broader and lasting outcomes.

VI. Recommendations

56.   OIOS makes five important recommendations to UNISFA to enhance its work for more tangible outcomes with the support of DPO.

Table 1: OIOS Recommendations

Recommendation	Indicators of Achievement	Responsible Entity
1. **Lean into the POC Strategy:** Ensure comprehensive consultations when revising the POC strategy and make further improvements to close the gaps between the draft and the final version of the strategy that responds to changing contextual dynamics. This should include the development of comprehensive POC objectives and indicators to measure impact while incorporating quality control mechanisms to ensure the achievement of set objectives.	• Evidence of DPO and UNISFA initiated draft POC strategy review processes. • Evidence of wide consultation sessions conducted with mission staff and AFPs. • Developed POC objectives and indicators of achievement included in the final version of the strategy. • Established quality control measures to assess the achievement of set objectives.	• DPO and UNISFA • UNISFA • UNISFA • UNISFA
2. **Amplify unarmed approaches to POC by prioritizing the strengthening of initiatives by the civilian and UNPOL components,** including the creation of a regular post for a POC Advisor that is a part of senior mission leadership to ensure thorough oversight and accountability for POC responsibilities among all staff and components, as well as integrated and context specific POC training.	• Evidence of amplified unarmed initiatives (CLO and UNPOL). • Evidence of consultations with DPO in designing the POC Advisor job description. • Evidence of including a POC advisor post in budgetary requests for the next two financial years. • Mission organogram indicating positioning of the POC Advisor post as part of the senior mission leadership team. • Evidence of support provided to CLO. • Evidence of integrated context-specific POC training conducted.	• UNISFA • UNISFA, supported by DPO. • UNISFA • UNISFA • DPO • UNISFA supported by DPO.

3. Community engagement: Develop a comprehensive Community Engagement SOP in collaboration with AFPs and partners, encompassing a standardized strategy for engaging diverse community groups (women, youth, PWDs, and children). This should include concrete strategies for disseminating and receiving information to build trust and manage community expectations by communicating the mandate through the joint use of strategic communication and community liaison.	• Evidence of consultation sessions conducted with all mission components, AFPs, and partners in developing the community engagement SOP. • Developed and approved community engagement SOP that includes strategies for engaging diverse groups, building trust, and managing community expectations.	• UNISFA • UNISFA
4. Conceptualizing the Community Protection Committees: Develop a comprehensive CPC strategy that clarifies their purpose and outlines their functions and mission engagements with CPCs. The strategy should also address their role post-mission withdrawal following the determination of the final status of Abyei and establish comprehensive documentation procedures.	• Developed and approved CPC strategy, including clarified purpose, outlined functions, mission engagement, documentation approaches, and the roles of CPCs post-mission withdrawal.	• UNISFA
5. Centralize the Early Warning System to ensure inclusive participation, joint reporting, and coordination across components while integrating key platforms like SAGE and CPAS. Enforce full implementation of the EWS SOP, incorporating all envisioned groups, mechanisms, and procedures essential for the optimal functionality of the system while prioritizing robust community engagement for local intelligence and integrating feedback loops.	• Evidence of a centralized EWS encompassing joint reporting and coordination of responses across components. • Evidence of integrating the EWS with SAGE and CPAS for decision-making. • Evidence of implementation of the EWS SOP.	• UNISFA • UNISFA • UNISFA

Annex I: Management Response

Comments received from the Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander for UNISFA

Reference your IOM of OIOS-2024-00658 dated 12 April 2024, UNISFA acknowledges the draft evaluation report submitted. Attached are the responses to the recommendations made.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the OIOS evaluation team for their patience and understanding. The evaluation process has enabled UNISFA to conduct an in-depth review of the mandate implementation with regards to our protection of civilian's mandate, which also included discussions at the recently held Mission Leadership Retreat. The report, and recommendations, will therefore serve as a guide for UNISFA leadership and for the mission to further review and develop our joint protection of civilian's responses, and internal procedures.

Thank you and best regards.

Comments received from DPO

DPO appreciates the consultation and engagement with OIOS on this report. Many of the department's inputs and concerns were addressed in the drafting process. Nonetheless, a few issues remain in the final report worth noting, per the below. DPO's action plan for its contributions to the implementation of relevant recommendations is attached.

Methodology

The use of "secondary data analysis", which involved analyzing "POC incidents" according to OIOS criteria, raises issues of methodological consistency across UN entities. Absent POC expertise in OIOS or criteria agreed with DPO, the results of this analysis remain debatable. Further, the fact that POC incidents were classified based on UNDSS classification (as per footnote 37) is problematic since these categories serve a different purpose and cover a wider range of events than those covered by the POC mandate. Specifically, the inclusion of "crime" and "hazards" in POC analysis is not relevant or accurate generally. Moreover, and very importantly, the report's focus on POC "incidents" and "response types" inherently excludes successful prevention efforts, which are the best form of protection. If the Mission succeeds in prevention – whether through dialogue or deterrent show of force – that will not surface through this analysis.

Paragraphs 28-32

This section on Tier II of the POC concept does not adequately reflect the integrated and comprehensive approach to POC in peacekeeping. By including data of numbers of incidents and fatalities in this section, it suggests that protection from physical violence is only effected by provision of physical protection. In fact, dialogue and engagement (or lack thereof) may have just as much impact on the number of incidents and fatalities as the projection or use of force.

Paragraphs 33-35

The focus on "crime" in the section on Tier III is too broad. "Crime trends" do not necessarily correspond with protection of civilians, particularly if they include non-violent crimes. Just as not all crimes are relevant to POC, not all criminal justice or rule of law work contributes to protection of civilians from physical violence.

Annex II: OIOS response to DPO management response

1. OIOS appreciates DPO's response to the evaluation report and acknowledges the concerns raised regarding the methodology and paragraphs 28-32 and 33-35.

2. Regarding the methodology, OIOS would like to clarify that the secondary data analysis relied on mission daily and weekly situation reports, where POC incidents are documented. Whereas the criterion used for classifying POC incidents was based on UNDSS classification, it is also the established and utilized criterion by the mission. The DPO POC Handbook provides guidance that missions should establish criteria for their POC strategy, and this was done accordingly by UNISFA. The criterion was provided to the OIOS team by JOC and UNDSS during the field visit briefing and was also documented in various mission documents (JOC incident database, component reports, and presentations) reviewed by the team. With regard to the use of "crimes" and "hazards" in POC analysis, it is crucial to note that criminal incidents pose the greatest threat to civilians in Abyei, a fact highlighted in Secretary-General reports and underscored in concerns expressed by the Security Council through its resolutions. The 2018 military capability study highlighted the change in security threats in Abyei from armed to criminal activities. Recognizing this change, the mission prioritizes addressing such threats due to their potential to escalate inter-communal tensions and jeopardize civilian safety in the area.

3. Regarding prevention efforts, OIOS classified mission response to POC incidents across six categories: before; on the same day; within two days after; more than two days after; response recorded but no timeframe recorded; and no response recorded. The first category included undertaken preventive efforts such as dialogues, security meetings, UNPOL foot patrols, military patrols, and setting up TOBs in areas with reported threats or hotspot areas. This is illustrated in Graph 3 and explained in para 47, which states that preventative efforts were mainly undertaken by the civilian and UNPOL components.

4. Regarding the comment on paras 28-32, achievements under each POC Tier were initially outlined under the effectiveness criterion while acknowledging the integrated and comprehensive nature of POC efforts, including dialogue and engagement. Collaborative initiatives observed among the mission components were duly noted under findings within each tier. Para 28 actually addresses integrated approaches by the military and police for deployment in hotspot areas. Despite highlighting challenges related to the EWS in paras 30 and 31, there was noted collaboration among all mission components in transmitting early warning information to JOC, which consolidated and triangulated the data before forwarding it to the military for action. Other noted collaborative initiatives across the components are comprehensively covered in the coherence criteria (paras 45-50).

5. Regarding the comment on paras 33-35, OIOS reiterates that the mission provided the classification of incidents and what constitutes each category, including crime.

Annex III: Theory of Change

Theory of Change: Outcome Evaluation of UNISFA's Implementation of the Protection of Civilians Mandate

Goal

Peaceful co-existence between communities in Abyei

Intermediate Outcomes

-Reduction in intra-and inter-communal violence	-Increased response capacities and acts of violence reduced	-Enhanced delivery of RoL to support protection of civilians (e.g., humane and dignified treatment of suspects, response to SGBV and HR violations)

Immediate Outcomes

-Increased participation of local leadership in resolving communal conflicts -Agreements on migration routes signed, implemented, and monitored	-Increased monitoring and reporting on POC threats, SGBV, and human rights violations (gender and age disaggregation) -Improved situation awareness, jointly identified threats, and coordinated UN response	-Enhanced ability of CPCs and JPCs to manage law and order -Improved ability of traditional justice actors to settle disputes -Increased participation of women in traditional courts

Outputs

-Multi-stakeholder and multi-thematic workshops and conferences facilitated	-Enhanced presence of peacekeepers in high-risk areas -Threats against civilians identified -Enhanced ability of TCC to protect civilians -Coordinated information gathering, monitoring, and verification conducted, and response plans developed -Joint threat identification and response plans and activities conducted	-CPCs and JPCs established and trained (e.g., community-oriented policing programs, SGBV and HR Violations) -Enhanced capacity of traditional justice actors (e.g., human rights laws) -Women appointed to traditional courts

Activities

-Facilitate conflict resolution and mediation efforts between conflicting parties (including migration conferences, local administration, and between local leaders)	-Physical protection of civilians by pre-emption, deterrence, and response through increased presence and patrols -Training TCCs on POC strategy (e.g., relevant international laws, risk assessment, contingency planning, early warning, gender conflict analysis) -Establishing community networks (early warning systems) -Information sharing with different relevant mission components, UN entities, and partners	- Establish and build the capacity of Community Protection Committees (CPCs) and Joint Community Peace Committees (JCPCs) -Capacity building of traditional justice actors -Advocate for the appointment of women to traditional courts

| Tier I | Tier II | Tier III |

Inputs

Security Council Resolutions, Mission Concept, Military and Police Concept of Operations, Support Concept, Substantive Component plans, Budget and Performance Reports, Human, Material, and Financial Resources, Strategic Review, SG Reports, POC Policy, UNISFA POC Strategy