

## **METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX**

### **Risky Business: International Support for Civilian Self-Protection**

#### **IRB Approval**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Swarthmore College approved this project on February 25, 2020 (ref: 17-18-103). A modification of the initial proposal to include in-person interviews in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was approved on May 10, 2023 (ref: FY22-23-76).

#### **Document Analysis**

*Primary sources* generated by international organizations

With the support of five research assistants, we systematically searched for documents about civilian protection and protection programming generated by the four international organizations in our sample. We conducted a complete review of each institution's website based on a list of search keys, including archival material, and cross-checked with policy databases and portals such as reliefweb.int. We retrieved a total of 142 documents,<sup>1</sup> including annual and quarterly reports, regional workshop reports, project reviews and evaluations, fieldnotes, case studies, official statements and policy, and programming guidelines and toolkits.

Each organization's staff also gave us access to internal documents such as internal reviews of peace operations and implementation of the Protection of Civilians mandate, internal communiques on protection approaches, and draft community-based protection guidelines. These documents, which were not produced for public consumption, more candidly discussed the shortcomings and challenges in their protection programming and specifically their efforts to support CSP.

To systematically analyze this material, we developed a guide with questions to be asked of each document. This guide had four core components, each with a set of questions and sub-questions (reproduced below), which allowed us to collect focused and comparable information.

#### ***1. Dilemma and types of unintended consequence***

- Is there evidence of the dilemma we hypothesized? And if so, at what level? Does the dilemma exist at the macro-policy level (i.e., whether to support civilian self-protection (CSP) generally), at the micro level (i.e., with respect to certain programs, in particular contexts), or both?
- What form did any unintended consequences take?
- Is there evidence of *unexpected drawbacks*? Did the organization's support for CSP have a detrimental effect that occurred *in addition to* the desired effect?

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<sup>1</sup> These included 20 documents for CIVIC, 32 for NP, 72 for OXFAM, and for 18 the UN.

- Is there evidence of *perverse effects*? Did the organization's support for CSP make individuals and communities less secure and/or diminish their capacity to protect themselves?
- Is there evidence of *moral hazard*? Did the actor being supported engage in risk(ier) behavior because they believed the external actor would protect them or incur the costs of protection?
- Is there evidence of *complicity*? Did the organization contribute to a wrong-doing through its support of CSP? And if so, to what degree? How essential/central was the external actor to the wrong-doing? How proximate was the external actor? How repetitive were the external actor's contributing actions?
- To what degree did the external actor have knowledge/awareness of the possible consequences of support for CSP? When did the actor become aware?

## **2. *Explaining risks***

- Is there evidence that any unintended consequences of supporting CSP resulted from ignorance? Lack of contextual awareness? Uncertainty? Did the organization lack information about the reliability or competence of those it supported (i.e., adverse selection) or about the threats that individuals and/or communities faced?
- Is there evidence that unintended consequences resulted from the organization's excessive focus on short-term priorities/immediate protection needs, such that the potential long-term impacts on their support were overlooked?
- Is there evidence that the unintended consequence resulted from the actor/institution being blinded by a belief in the 'rightfulness' of protective action?

## **3. *Relevance of institutional features***

- Did the *constitution* of the organization (i.e., whether it is intergovernmental/nongovernmental/hybrid) impact its protection policy and the risks of intended consequences?
- Did the breadth of the organization's *mandate* (i.e., only focused on protection vs. multi-mandate) or narrow/broad understanding of protection affect its exposure to and calculation of risk?
- Did the organization's "degree of embeddedness" in the local community impact its contextual knowledge, degree of influence over local actors, and degree of decision-making autonomy?

## **4. *Institutional responses and mitigation strategies***

- How (if at all) did the organization deal with the risk of unintended consequences and the broader dilemma of supporting CSP?
- Is there evidence that the external actor adopted measures to try to prevent possible negative unintended consequences (e.g., screening local partners, monitoring their behavior, sanctioning their undesirable actions, or other mitigation measures)?
- Is there evidence that support was stopped or suspended as a result of negative unintended consequences?

## Interview Data

We also conducted 36 interviews with representatives of our four selected cases;<sup>2</sup> 20 of them were conducted online, and 16 in person in Washington, Geneva, New York, and Kinshasa. Our respondents were all directly linked to the civilian protection component of their organization and included people from different ranks within the organizations, current and former staff, and staff working in the headquarters and country offices. All our interviewees provided oral consent or signed an informed consent form, approved by the IRB.

The interviews followed a similar structure to the guide used for the document analysis. However, the findings from the document analysis served as the basis for delving deeper into relevant topics and exploring ambiguous or uncovered areas. Moreover, we used the interviews – particularly those with staff from country offices – to probe the specific challenges identified in those contexts. Thus, while the interview guide shared a basic structure and core questions across all interviewees and organizations (key for collecting comparative data), these were tailored to each interviewee.

We interviewed the staff of the four organizations instead of members of the communities in which their programs were implemented for two main reasons. First, as noted in the research design section, our unit of analysis was the organization rather than the country, conflict, or community. Second, our theoretical framework speaks to the unintended consequences experienced by the organization (i.e., it is actor centric).

While the decision to focus on the unintended consequences experienced by the organization is consistent with our research design and theoretical framework, we were aware of the impact this could have on the data. For example, representatives of these organizations might not be willing to disclose the negative consequences of their actions (for example, in situations of complicity). Even when they might be *willing* to disclose such information, they might not always be aware of the existence or extent of these consequences, which may have resulted in underreporting. We took three steps to mitigate this potential shortcoming.

1. We framed most of our questions in terms of the *risks* of unintended consequences and initially asked hypothetical, rather than factual, questions (e.g., *do you think that by doing x, you could end engaging in y?*, rather than *have you engaged in y?*). This more indirect approach to questioning had the advantage of (a) making it easier for the respondent to report any known risks or actual unintended consequences and (b) inviting the – potentially unaware – respondent to reflect on these consequences even if they did not immediately have examples from their organizations.
2. To formulate questions, we leveraged concrete situations that we identified in the public documents we analyzed that, in our judgment, indicated the potential for unintended consequences (e.g., *in a [year x] report published by your organization about your activities in [country x], we learned that your team experienced [x]. Can you tell us more about this?*). This approach made it less likely that the respondent would be able to say there had not been any unintended consequences and, since the information came from public documents, they could be more forthcoming about the details.

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<sup>2</sup> These included four with CIVIC, six with NP, four with OXFAM, six with the UN, and six with other organizations.

3. If there were no examples of unintended consequences in an organization's public documents, we used (anonymized) examples from other organizations that have experienced risks and challenges and asked them if their organization had experienced something similar in the areas where they operate.

Our awareness of these potential biases and our efforts to address them gives us confidence that, despite the challenges associated with interviewing people who may have incentives not to report negative experiences of their organizations (or who may not be aware of such experiences, we were able to get a reliable overview of the risks of unintended consequences associated with supporting CSP.

### ***List of interviews***

#### **United Nations**

1. DPO, 1/17/2020 [background/not for attribution], New York [f]
2. OCHA, 1/17/2020 [background/not for attribution], New York [f]
3. OCHA, 1/17/2020 [background/not for attribution], New York [m]
4. ASG DPO/DPA Africa, 2/28/2020, New York [m]
5. DPO, 4/7/2020, Virtual [m]
6. OCHA, 2/28/2020, New York [m]
7. DPO/DPA, 5/28/2020, Virtual [m]
8. Civil Affairs DPO, 10/7/2021, Virtual [m]
9. Former DPO, 9/21/2021, Virtual [m]
10. DPO, 9/28/2021, Virtual [f]
11. DPO, 8/10/2023, Kinshasa [m]
12. SRSG MONUSCO, 8/14/2023, Kinshasa [f]
13. MONUSCO, 8/11/2023, Kinshasa [f]
14. OCHA, 8/9/2023, Virtual [f]
15. Political Affairs MONUSCO, 8/12/2023, Kinshasa [m]
16. Civilian Affairs, MONUSCO, 8/11/2023, Kinshasa [f]

#### **CIVIC**

17. Headquarters general officer Federico Borello, 12/15/2021, Virtual [m]
18. Headquarters protection officer 20/12/2021 Virtual [m]
19. Headquarters protection officer, 18/01/22 Virtual [m]
20. Former country officer, 02/02/2022, Virtual [m]

#### **NP**

21. Senior NP representative, 2/27/2020, New York [m]
22. Former NP staff, 3/27/2020, Virtual [f]
23. Former NP staff, 11/11/2020, Virtual [f]
24. NP, 1/20/2020, Virtual [m]
25. NP, 9/29/2021, Virtual [f]
26. NP, 9/30/2021, Virtual [f]

#### **Oxfam**

27. Senior staff, 3/27/2020, Virtual [f]
28. Oxfam staff, 3/27/2020, Virtual [m]
29. Former Oxfam staff, 9/2/2021, Virtual [m]
30. Senior staff, 12/21/2021, Virtual [f]

## **Other\***

31. Swiss mission, 2/27/2020, New York [m]
32. Indonesian mission, 2/28/2020, New York [m]
33. Indonesian mission, 2/28/2020, New York [m]
34. Belgian mission, 2/28/2020, New York [f]
35. Belgian mission, 2/28/2020, New York [f]
36. UK mission, 6/2/2020, Virtual [f]

*\* This category consists of donors, government officials, and other stakeholders who are not former employees of the studied organizations.*

## **Workshop**

On January 29, 2020 (early on in our research, and prior to most of our interviews), we organized a half-day, in-person workshop on Civilian Protection at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. We invited representatives of our four cases as well as other international organizations that have supported or were planning to/considering supporting CSP. This included the executive directors of NP and CIVIC, senior UN officials and Oxfam staff, as well as protection officers at IRC and ICRC.

During the workshop, which was conducted under the “Chatham House” rule, organizations shared concrete experiences supporting CSP, openly discussing challenges and mitigation strategies. The primary purpose of this event was to have organizations discuss their own experiences in an interactive setting to help us identify more directly what was common to multiple organizations and what was specific to some organizational types. In addition, as we invited “out of sample” organizations, we could also: 1) further substantiate our hypothesis that the imperative to support local actors entails tensions and dilemmas for a range of international actors and 2) explore the extent to which the dynamics we had identified as associated with a specific organizational type were indeed shared by other organizations of the same type and did not represent idiosyncratic manifestations of our selected cases.

Before the workshop, we asked each organization to produce a short memo about their work supporting CSP, particularly reflecting on their successes, challenges, and lessons learned. This information was crucial in terms of obtaining a better understanding of the relationship between the organization and CSP and learning about the concrete challenges faced by international actors supporting CSP. These memos were not meant for public consumption beyond the core participants of the workshops, and in some cases were only shared with the core research team. This allowed the organizations to reflect more openly on the challenges and concerns related to supporting CSP on the ground. Unlike the other non-public documents we reviewed, these memos focused on CSP and contained focused reflections on our main topics of interest.