



GLOBAL PROTECTION FORUM 2022

Thematic Segment – Access for Protection

Concept Note

Community Engagement with Armed Actors: Strengthening Protection, Prevention and Response

Friday 28th October, 10:00 – 11:30 CEST

The number of protracted, non-international armed conflicts, as well as the number and range of actors participating in them have significantly increased in the last twenty years. This has presented challenges for protection actors seeking to prevent and respond to protection risks. The interaction between civilian communities and armed actors is complex, ambiguous, and changes through time. Community engagement with armed groups is often less visible and can take place significantly before any recognised mediation or negotiation processes. The protection community have a gap in understanding the complexities of community engagement with armed actors towards self-protection – and the opportunities, and risks, of supporting such efforts. Strengthening this understanding, and emerging good practice between peace and protection actors, gives opportunities for protection actors to better understand how to engage, or step back, towards strengthened efforts to prevent protection risks and therefore strengthen protection outcomes.

This event will be co-convened between the HPG / ODI and the Centre for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC). It will discuss emerging findings from HPG/ODI's new two year (Apr 2022 – Mar 2024) research project on community engagement with armed actors: strengthening protection, prevention and response. The research has a specific focus on the implications for protection and peace actors. CIVIC, as an operational and policy actor supporting community protection efforts, including by engaging in dialogue with armed actors and facilitating community / armed actor engagement with the objective of strengthening protection outcomes, will bring key learning from its operations. The event will convene panelists across operational, advocacy and policy expertise, including some who will be contributing to a special edition in the [Humanitarian Exchange](#) in November 2022 which will specifically focus on this theme.

Panelists will discuss the agency of communities in engaging with armed actors towards their self-protection; the strategies and factors that contribute to (or undermine) successful self-protection strategies. It will explore the implications for humanitarian protection and peacebuilding actors, including how successful community engagement efforts can be supported, and that explicit efforts are taken not to undermine such engagement.

It fits the two priorities of the GPC annual event on community-based protection and humanitarian negotiation. It will also consider how to better bridge approaches between national and international peace and protection actors. In so doing it will identify shifts in behaviours, practice and policies required to strengthen access for protection efforts.

The expected outcomes of the session are strengthened understanding of factors that contribute towards successful protection efforts specific to community engagement; implications for humanitarian mediation, negotiation and humanitarian / armed actor engagement towards strengthening protection outcomes.

Speakers, Moderation and Guests

- **Moderator:** Gemma Davies, Senior Research Fellow, HPG, ODI.
- **Panelist:** Leigh Mayhew, Research Officer GRR, ODI.
- **Panelist:** Wendy MacClinchy, UN Director, CIVIC
- **Panelist:** Clément Kocou Gbedey, National Co-ordinator for Niger, WANEP.
- **Panelist:** Nils Carstensen, Local to Global Protection.
- **Panelist:** Mike Jobbins, Global Affairs and Partnerships Lead, Search for Common Ground
- **Panelist:** Kiran Kothatri, Advisor - Relations with Armed Actors and Children in conflict, Save the Children.
- **Closing remarks:** Sara Brodd, Senior Protection Specialist, SIDA.