



Global Protection Forum

From the Ground Up: Learning from Locally Led Efforts to Strengthen the Protection of Civilians

14h – 15h30 CET, 6 November 2024

1. Background

The Protection of Civilians in situations of armed conflict remains ever-more pressing during this time of increasing conflict and violence globally. Locally-led efforts and interventions to shield civilians from the worst harms associated with conflict often represent the first—and sometimes most effective—approach. Local actors and community networks bring distinct advantages to these efforts: their presence, proximity, access, trust, credibility, flexibility, and accountability allow them to adapt quickly to changing conflict dynamics, the shifting positions and interests of armed groups, and the unique capacities and agency of communities.

Despite growing interest in the role of local actors in preventing and reducing violence against civilians, there remains limited, fragmented understanding of how best to support, enhance and scale their impact. Various efforts to more systematically learn from locally led approaches to the protection of civilians have been underway over the past several years.

This event aims to be a further contribution to such learnings by convening a diverse panel to discuss their experiences supporting and learning from local protection efforts in real-time across various conflict contexts, including Somalia, Ukraine, Mozambique, DRC and Chad. The speakers will explore how local actors are approaching complex and often high-risk protection interventions in situations of armed conflict, address the limits, dilemmas and challenges they face and identify ways that other protection actors and allies can better support and contribute to strengthening these critical local efforts.

2. Guiding Questions:

- How are local actors engaging with armed groups and trying to address the threats that civilians face in situations of armed conflict? How do local actors build and maintain trust with both civilians and armed groups in high-risk areas?
- How are local actors managing to reduce or interrupt violence and what impact is this having on the protection of civilians? What mechanisms are in place for local actors to monitor, evaluate, and report the impact of their PoC efforts in real-time?
- What kinds of adaptations and context-specific approaches are local actors using to support the effectiveness of PoC-related interventions in different communities? What are some of the

ethical dilemmas that arise when local actors must choose between neutrality and advocacy or negotiation in their PoC efforts?

- Can and should locally-led protection of civilians efforts be scaled-up? How can they be meaningfully supported by protection actors and allies (including international protection actors, donors, peace operations, member states etc.)?
- How can protection actors better respect and leverage the existing frameworks and informal systems that local actors already have in place? How can they enhance coordination without imposing rigid structures?
- What actions are needed by international and national actors to further learn from and better share the risks local actors face in advancing protection of civilians related efforts (i.e. engaging with armed actors, coordinating evacuations, protection by presence etc.)? What is working right now/could be further strengthened in terms of support from international partners and donors for local actors? What has made the biggest impact in terms of them being able to do their work successfully?

3. Speakers

Moderator:

Gemma Davies, Senior Research Fellow – Protection, ODI’s Humanitarian Policy Group

Panelists:

Ayan Abdirashid Ali, Researcher and Lawyer, Somalia

Elourd Luanda, Programme Manager with SOPROP, DR Congo

Anton Yaremchuk, co-Founder and Executive Director with Base UA, Ukraine

Sophie - Lin Omadjang, Senior Protection Officer with UNHCR, Chad

Nyararai Magudu, Technical Director with GCR, Mozambique

Closing Remarks:

Tiffany Easthom, Executive Director, Nonviolent Peaceforce

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