Chapter 8 | Analysis and planning

This chapter discusses the importance of analysis and planning for every aspect of civil affairs work, and gives an overview of the tools and processes relevant for analysis and planning in UN Field Missions. It provides basic models for conducting both analysis and planning exercises that can be adapted to the needs of Civil Affairs Officers and components.

8.1. Conflict analysis

If the most important skill of a good Civil Affairs Officer were to be defined, it would most likely be his/her ability to understand the context in which s/he is deployed and to analyse the conflict dynamics that undermine the peace process. Conflict analysis is not the prerogative of a few analysts in JMAC or political affairs, but is the responsibility of every Civil Affairs Officer, whose analysis at the field level is often the basis for much of the overall conflict analysis carried out at the mission headquarters. If the basic facts and the interpretation of the local conflict dynamics are inaccurate, the overarching strategy of the mission to fulfil its mandate is likely to be misdirected. It is clear that
understanding and analysing the conflict is not a goal in itself, but instead a means to defining a strategy that can address the dynamics of the conflict and help to set the peace and stabilization process on solid ground. Civil affairs activities, like any activity, should be planned in such a way that feasible objectives are set out in advance based on clear analysis.

Civil affairs will clearly not be the only actor within the mission conducting conflict analysis, and it will not be the main one at the national level. However, analysis from the local level will feed into a complex stream of analysis by different internal and external actors within a post-conflict mission environment, sometimes carried out collaboratively and sometimes in parallel with each other. Civil Affairs Officers need to be aware of these analyses, especially the higher order analysis (for example, in an Integrated Strategic Framework) underpinning the mission mandate implementation strategy. If available and of good quality, higher order analysis can be a good starting point for civil affairs; however, general assumptions need to be tested in the field at the local level – and then fed back up. It makes sense for the civil affairs component, and also the units and field teams within the component, to carry out and maintain their own conflict analysis for the following reasons:

- To ensure a sufficient level of detail (for example about dynamics at the local level and between the local and national levels);
- To feed into and help refine the higher order analysis;
- To provide a reference framework to guide ongoing civil affairs reporting and analysis; and
- To provide the foundation for the development of strategic plans, as well as for updating them based on new information or an evolving understanding of the situation.

There are many different ways to conduct and write down an analysis. In any case, making the analysis explicit – rather than just assuming that everyone shares the same understanding – is extremely important in ensuring that everyone involved in implementing the plan understands it in the same way. The actual “process” of jointly conducting a conflict analysis and planning exercise, for example at the component annual retreat, can also be an excellent way of ensuring that everyone is on the same page. A shared analysis of the conflict overall is a good reference point for individual Civil Affairs Officers or teams to carry out a more in-depth analysis of a particular issue, and to analyse the meaning or relevance of specific events or incidents as they occur.

**Lessons learned on conflict analysis**

There are many different ways to approach conflict analysis. The section on analysis in this Handbook draws heavily on the lessons learned through the Reflecting on...
Peace Practice Project (RPP), which is an experience-based learning process involving agencies with programmes that attempt to prevent or mitigate violent conflict. This section reproduces material from the RPP manual, with their permission, but adapted for civil affairs purposes.46

The RPP process revealed that there was no consistent practice or accepted methodology for conducting conflict analysis. Certain trends were noted, however:

- **Practitioners often do only partial analysis.** They focus on how their particular approach or area of interest might fit or be useful in the context, which can lead them to miss important aspects of the conflict or to develop misguided or irrelevant programmes.
- **Many people carry out context analysis, believing it to be conflict analysis.** A context analysis seeks a broad understanding of the entire political, economic and social (historical, environmental etc.) scene. A conflict analysis is more narrowly focused on the specific elements of that broader picture that may trigger or propel conflict.
- **Analysis is not updated.** Analyses are often performed only at the beginning of the programme and there is a lack of ongoing analysis, other than the natural process of noting events and changes.
- **Programming is not linked to analysis.** In a seeming contradiction, RPP found no clear link between a programme’s effectiveness and whether or how it had performed conflict analysis. One explanation is that even when practitioners do analysis, they often fail to link their programme strategy to it. It is also important to note that even good analysis may not guarantee effectiveness given that there are many factors that cannot be controlled.
- **Many people work on the basis of an implicit analysis,** often based on their deep experience of a situation. Some programmes – often effective ones – are grounded in an *informal* analysis that draws on the long experience of local people, or long-time observers of a conflict. Analysis may be constantly updated, as individuals move about and talk with many different people. The downside of this approach can be a lack of shared understanding among teams or within an organization.

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46 RPP engaged over 200 agencies and many individuals who work on conflict around the world in a collaborative effort to learn how to improve the effectiveness of efforts to establish and build peace. The agencies included international peace and conflict resolution NGOs as well as local organizations and groups working for peace in their countries. By analysing these experiences through 26 case studies and consultations with over 1000 practitioners, RPP was able to clarify why some analysis techniques work and others do not. Diana Chigas and Peter Woodrow, *Reflecting on Peace Practice: Participant Training Manual* (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2009).
Therefore, efforts to make the implicit more explicit and to share observations are usually valuable.

**Elements of good conflict analysis**

While the research did not find agreement regarding any particular methodology or framework for analysis, it did identify several shortcomings of existing methods and was able to identify elements of analysis that, if not addressed, lessen the effectiveness of programming. This included:

- **Too comprehensive.** Many of the frameworks for analysis aim to be comprehensive, but do not help to identify which factors are the most important. As a result, they do not help practitioners to identify priorities and focus on factors that are important to the conflict dynamic. The lists of factors can be overwhelming!

- **Lists without dynamics.** Conflict analysis tools tend to present a static snapshot, often in the form of a list of factors, without much sense of how the factors work together. The **dynamics** of conflict are missing.

- **No linkage to strategy.** Analysis processes and results remain disconnected from programme strategies. Even good analysis processes do not enable people to identify what to do about the situation.

- **Biased and narrow.** Analyses tend to be performed by single agencies, in order to justify the agencies’ favourite approach or methodology (dialogues, trauma healing etc.) or sector (for example, women, youth), without much sense of whether these approaches are the most effective or the best use of scarce funding resources for peacebuilding.

Where these limitations are transcended, good analyses – that is, ones that help practitioners to develop programmes that do not “miss the mark” – ask certain questions:

1. **Of all the causes of the conflict, what are the key driving factors** (both issues and people), and what are the causes and effects of these factors? Key driving factors are factors without which the conflict would not exist or would be significantly different.

2. **What are the relationships and dynamics among factors?** How do the factors interact and affect each other? How are actors and factors related?

3. **What could be stopped and what could be supported** and who will do it? Many programmes are biased towards creating “positive peace” by building or reinforcing positive factors. The most effective programmes also ask what factors (actors, issues, motives, resources, dynamics, attitudes, behaviours) maintain or
reinforce the conflict system, as well as considering who would resist movement towards peace and why. Conflict analysis must clarify what the war system or injustice system depends on, and how it could be interrupted. Must the trade in arms be stopped? Recruitment of young people? Exploitation of natural resources to support warring? Misuse of the media to target certain groups or distort facts? Funding from diaspora groups? And so on.

4. **Who are the “key” actors?** Key actors are people or groups who have significant influence on the conflict dynamics, are able to decide or strongly influence decisions for or against peace, and/or are able to “spoil” or undermine peace.

5. **What are the international or regional dimensions** of the conflict? Analysis and programming often focus on the immediate conflict area and fail to incorporate the powerful influences of the broader area. Good analysis asks how the policies and actions of forces outside the immediate local context (village, province, nation) affect the conflict, how such factors might be addressed, and what kinds of local-international cooperation are needed to handle these external issues.

6. **How can local/community factors** of conflict be related or linked to what is happening at the national level?

7. **What has already been tried, and with what results?** Has the proposed programming approach been tried in this conflict before, and if so, what were the outcomes? Practitioners often repeat programme approaches (such as dialogues, training, women’s consultations etc.) that others have tried before with little effect (or that have even failed) without analysing why this has happened.

**A simple conflict analysis model**

Based on these findings, RPP developed an approach to conflict analysis that builds on other models or systems for looking at conflict. The model outlined below draws on this approach, but adapts it for the civil affairs context. It aims to keep the processes simple without losing the real complexity of the situation.

This analysis model can be used by individuals or by groups. Jointly developing a shared analysis is one of the strongest foundations for solid teamwork and the civil affairs component should aim to do this exercise as a group, bringing in other partners as appropriate.

**Step 1 ➔ Three-box analysis**

The box below can be used to conduct a brief conflict analysis of the context you are working in. The analysis can be performed at various levels (local district, province, national, regional). The focus could also be on a particular issue, a subcomponent of the larger conflict.
### Forces for peace →
- What are the forces in the situation that exists now that can be built upon to promote movement towards peace?
- What currently connects people across conflict lines?
- How do people cooperate?
- Who exercises leadership for peace and how?

(Note: these should not be things that you want to exist or that you would like to see—they must be true now.)

### Forces against peace/or conflict
- What factors are working against peace or for conflict?
- What factors, issues or elements are causing conflict and/or dividing people, and how?

### Key actors
- Which individuals or groups in the situation are in a position to strongly influence the conflict—either positively or negatively?
- Who can decide for/against peace?

(Note: these are not necessarily targets/participants, such as women, youth or religious leaders. We may be interested in engaging with those groups, but they are not always “key” in the situation.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forces for peace →</th>
<th>Forces against peace/or conflict</th>
<th>Key actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>What factors are working against peace or for conflict?</td>
<td>Which individuals or groups in the situation are in a position to strongly influence the conflict—either positively or negatively?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What currently connects people across conflict lines?</td>
<td>What factors, issues or elements are causing conflict and/or dividing people, and how?</td>
<td>Who can decide for/against peace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do people cooperate?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who exercises leadership for peace and how?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: these should not be things that you want to exist or that you would like to see—they must be true now.)

### Figure 8.1 Three-box analysis of conflict

**Step 2 → Key driving factors of conflict**
Identify, among the factors against peace or for conflict, which ones are “key driving factors”. These are the factors without which the conflict either would not exist or would be totally different.

**Step 3 → Explore the dynamics among factors**
If conflicts are understood as dynamic systems, it is important to understand how the conflict factors interact with each other. Explore how the factors might interact with each other in causal loops. Which factors reinforce other factors (i.e. make them increase)? Which factors balance or mitigate others? The following example maps the relationship between local government performance and community relations, with the assumption that citizen cooperation and participation is essential to long-term peace. The “causal loop” diagram explores (in simplified form) some of the interactions between local government performance, service delivery, people’s perceptions of state legitimacy, and citizen cooperation with local government. (Note that this example is not intended to be a picture of “the answer” about local government performance but rather an example of one use of an analysis methodology: there are many important dynamics not reflected here.)
This cycle can work either positively (a “virtuous” cycle) or negatively (a “vicious” cycle). Good performance improves service delivery, increases people’s sense of legitimate governance and increases their willingness to cooperate with local government and pay tax. Poor performance, on the other hand, results in poor or inequitable service delivery, a lowered sense of legitimacy and decreased willingness to cooperate or contribute.
Step 4 → Explore how key actors intersect with conflict dynamics (and with each other)
Identify in just a few words:
• Each actor’s possible influence in improving or making worse any of the dynamics identified; and
• Each actor’s own interests and objectives.

It can also be productive to map out the relationships between key actors, describing their relationship in a few words in terms of its impact on the issue (positive, negative, allies, enemies, ambiguous, high/low influence, high/low polarization etc.).

Different actors and institutions have specific motivations and interests. If those interests are understood it is possible to design effective approaches to building alliances and partnerships, or carrying out advocacy or mobilizing action. Civil affairs may not always be the best-placed actor to carry out certain interventions, so actor-mapping helps to identify other actors who might have a more effective influence in a given situation. This understanding can strengthen alliance-building strategies, capacity-building strategies and advocacy strategies.

Step 5 → Identify points of intervention
There are no quick and easy formulas for finding leverage points. Due to the complex ways in which the parts of a system are connected, leverage points are often not
intuitive; indeed, they are often counterintuitive. Successful interventions often involve breaking a link between factors – either by changing the key assumptions and attitudes that underlie the links, by working on the parties’ behaviour directly, or by changing the factors themselves, including the structural elements and rules that shape how the parties behave. In addition to trying to break or weaken links in vicious cycles, as described above, interventions may also seek to create or strengthen links in virtuous cycles.

The answers to the following questions help to focus on those elements that will make the biggest difference:

- What factors are driving the evolution of the system? Which factors, if they were changed, would lead to a significant change in the system?
- Where are the “weak” links? Where are the opportunities to break links between factors, so that x does not need to lead to y?
- Where are there positive dynamics that can be reinforced?

It is worth bearing in mind that later, when it comes to planning a response to the conflict, there is a further question to be asked:

- Given who we are (our mandate, resources, structures, access etc.), which of these are we most likely to be able to influence, either directly or by mobilizing others?

**Step 6 → Write down and share the analysis**

People that have participated in an analysis process such as that described here will have developed a good shared analysis of the conflict, and they will be able to reference and discuss it based on the graphics and notes that were produced as part of the process. They will also be able to reconnect as a group later and quickly see how the analysis may need to be updated based on these graphics.

However, it is also essential that the analysis can be shared with others who were not part of the development process, and for this reason, the analysis needs to be translated into narrative form, making use of any graphics where they help to illustrate the points being made. There are many ways to write down the analysis, no one being necessarily better than any other. However, the better written and more concise the narrative, the more likely people are to read and reference it.

**Step 7 → Update the analysis**

Post-conflict environments are highly dynamic and can be influenced by a number of factors, such as elections, departure of old actors and arrival of new ones, and changes in international or regional dynamics. Access to new information can also influence the analysis. It is vital that conflict analysis is updated regularly as the situation changes.
Beyond conflict analysis

This chapter has introduced a simple model for conflict analysis that can be a starting point for civil affairs work. However, it is clear that the analysis needs do not stop here and that there are other non-conflict types of analysis, such as analysis relating to support for local actors and institution-strengthening, that are also important for civil affairs work. To a certain extent these issues are discussed in subsequent chapters, however, Civil Affairs Officers will likely research and find tools and resources from many different sources, well beyond what is covered in this Handbook, to help them to assess and analyse the specific issues that they face.

One particular tool that is worth mentioning here, however, is the formula that has been developed to help missions with mandates to protect civilians to assess the level of risk faced by populations under threat.

From the toolkit:

Assessing the level of risk to civilians under threat

The DPKO/DFS Framework for Drafting Comprehensive Protection of Civilians (POC) Strategies in UN Peacekeeping Operations explains that risk can be understood as the relationship between threat and vulnerability.

**Threat** relates to the intentions, motivations and aggressive capabilities of the perpetrator(s) of violence. Are they physically/militarily strong, well-supplied and effective? Politically protected? Strongly motivated by the benefit they receive from threatening or perpetrating violence? A stronger threat means a greater risk of violence.

**Vulnerability** relates to the susceptibility of a particular group or population to physical violence. Those who are displaced from their homes, for example, are generally more vulnerable to violence. Environmental factors, such as geographic location and infrastructure, can also increase vulnerability. The capacity of local communities to protect themselves or to access outside assistance are factors that impact their vulnerability.

Analysis should look to identify the ways in which threat and vulnerability could be decreased, and the capacity of local communities increased, as in the following example.

**Example: Rape of women while collecting firewood**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduce threats?</th>
<th>Action which changes the motivation or capacity of perpetrators: sensitization campaigns, prosecutions, community pressure etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce vulnerability?</td>
<td>Reduce the need or frequency of collecting firewood; change patterns or routes etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase capacity?</td>
<td>Going out in groups; accompaniment of firewood collection by someone whose presence would deter attack.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Box 8.1 From the toolkit: Assessing the level of risk to civilians under threat
8.2. Planning

Planning tools in UN peacekeeping

This section provides an explanation of some of the key tools associated with planning in missions that Civil Affairs Officers may encounter when planning their work. It is important to note that this represents an idealized representation of the hierarchy of possible plans within a UN Field Mission and that not all missions will have the full array of plans, particularly at mission start-up.

![Diagram of planning tools in UN peacekeeping](image)

Figure 8.4 Idealized hierarchy of planning tools in UN Field Missions
Integration, requiring a common strategic effort by the mission and UNCT, is the guiding principle for UN planning at the field level, and the key reference for this is the Integrated Mission Planning Process (IMPP).47 A major contribution of the civil affairs component should be to ensure that local and regional nuances from around the country, as well as the concerns and priorities of the local population, are well understood and reflected in planning decisions.

- A UN countrywide, Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF) brings together the combined mandates of the UN Field Mission (i.e. from the Security Council and General Assembly) and the UN Country Team, as well as their resources, around an overarching framework of agreed peace consolidation priorities. The ISF is a strategic plan for the UN Field Mission and UN agencies, funds and programmes operating in the host country. It provides a vision of the UN’s strategic objectives for peace consolidation, with agreed results, responsibilities and timelines and a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation. It is usually a multi-year plan. It is required in a country where there is both a UN Country Team and either a multidimensional peacekeeping operation or a special political mission. The UN ISF is linked to national strategies and plans, as well as other relevant UN plans such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP). Civil affairs should contribute actively to the development and implementation of an ISF, for example by contributing to the initial conflict analysis and development of priorities, and to the monitoring of implementation.

- The mission concept is based on the ISF and translates the political intent in Security Council and other mandates into strategic planning guidance for mission components. The mission concept contains:
  
  (a) a vision to capture and communicate the purpose of the mission;

  (b) a strategy to promote coherence by sequencing and prioritization of tasks within the context of the conditions governing their achievement; and

  (c) timely and detailed direction to guide and enable the planning and operational processes of each mission component.

It is a multi-year plan that covers the life cycle of the UN Field Mission. It is required in all UN Field Missions except for special political missions.

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47 IMPP Guidelines for the Field, available on POINT. The “Planning Toolkit for Rule of Law and Security Institutions Components” mentioned in the Recommended resources section at the end of this chapter also contains a lot of practical guidance on how to approach the UN planning tools described here. Formal DPKO/DFS Policy and Guidance on Programme Management is also under development.
On the basis of the mission concept, it is good practice for civil affairs components to develop a **multi-year strategy or concept of operations**, which analyses the current situation in a sector, and identifies the strategic objective(s) for the UN Field Mission in this sector and how best to implement them. These concepts of operations or multi-year strategies do not contain detailed operational information on outputs and activities.

In some cases civil affairs components may also have **multi-year programme plans** (for example, a plan for a multi-year joint programme or joint initiative with the national government and another UN entity on local government support, or a multi-year training programme). These would feed into the development of the component’s annual workplan.

The **component annual workplan** is a key management tool. It is drawn from the multi-year strategy or concept of operations. It maps out the activities that will be undertaken over the course of one year in pursuit of civil affairs objectives. It generally follows the same timeframe as individual workplans – which is April to March. It identifies timeframes, regional priorities and how resources will be used, as well as key indicators of impact and progress. It also needs to include details of the logic behind the specific approaches identified. It is a key document for staff members to understand their role and how their individual work fits into the broader strategic work of the component. Developing the details of this plan is often the main feature of an annual retreat for the entire civil affairs component.

The **field/regional team workplan** is developed by the civil affairs team at the field office or even sub-office level to translate the component workplan into concrete activities and outputs in the specific context of the office’s area of responsibility. This is the critical tactical level where national conflict analysis is tested in the local context and where a bottom-up and top-down approach in planning ideally come together to deliver realistic outputs and sound rationales behind the proposed activities. Often this workplan will need to be agreed with both civil affairs senior management and the regional head of office to ensure integration with the regional strategy, while pursuing the civil affairs overall mandate.

As part of the annual workplan, the component or team may design and implement specific projects with their own **project plan(s)** that are one year or less in duration, such as Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), or projects on specific issues or events, such as a sensitization campaign.

The **individual workplan** elaborates on the performance expectations for individual staff members, and is based on the field/regional team workplan. It is used as the basis for evaluation of individual performance over an annual period from April to March through the ePAS system.
The annual workplan of the overall UN Field Mission is funded through contributions from Member States. The annual budget of the UN Field Mission is called a “Results-based Budget” (RBB). The RBB focuses on the high-level goals of the mission, and often combines the work of more than one component under one expected accomplishment. The budgetary year runs from July to June, however, the budgetary committees of the General Assembly tend to start looking at mission budgets in February and planning within missions therefore starts earlier, generally around August each year. As the plans cover one year, and the planning is done one year in advance, there is a time lapse of up to two years between budgeting and implementation. Given the fact that these are highly dynamic environments, the actual outputs may change based on analysis of the situation as it unfolds (these changes to the plan will then be explained during the reporting process at the end of the budgetary year). For this reason the RBB is better understood as a budgeting tool than as an operational planning tool. See also chapter 7 for a discussion on planning operational costs.

In addition to these tools, civil affairs staff should be aware of any national plans and strategies, as well as mechanisms used by major partners, including:

- The **United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)**, a planning mechanism between a government and the UN Country Team. The end product, a programme document, describes the collective actions and strategies of the UN in support of national development; including outcomes, activities and UN agency responsibilities that are agreed by government and that support national priorities. An UNDAF typically runs for five years, with reviews at various points.
- The **Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP)** is a strategic plan for humanitarian response in a given country or region, developed at the field level by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Country Team, under the leadership of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator. It normally includes the following elements: a common analysis of the humanitarian context; an assessment of needs; best, worst and most likely scenarios; stakeholder analysis; a statement of longer term goals and objectives; prioritized response plans; and a framework for monitoring the strategy. The CHAP is the foundation for developing a Consolidated Humanitarian Appeal or a Flash Appeal. As such, it is a critical step in the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), although the CHAP, as a strategic planning tool, can also be produced for humanitarian situations that do not require a Consolidated Appeal. As a part of the CHAP, priorities (for example, humanitarian relief, protection and early recovery) are established and areas of assistance for affected populations in need are outlined. This could include such areas as food aid, nutrition, health, shelter, water, sanitation.

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48 It should be noted that the budget cycle for special political missions (SPMs) runs from January to December.
and hygiene (WASH), protection, education, agriculture and fisheries, logistics and others.

- A Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan (PRSP) “…contains an assessment of poverty and describes the macroeconomic, structural, and social policies and programmes that a country will pursue over several years to promote growth and reduce poverty, as well as external financing needs and the associated sources of financing. They are prepared by governments in low-income countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders and external development partners, including the IMF and the World Bank.”

Aligning these different instruments can be a challenge, particularly as timelines vary. In theory, the PRSP process should feed into the UNDAF and there should be harmonization between UN frameworks and national planning cycles.

**Strategic planning for civil affairs work**

Civil affairs will be required to fit into and around the various UN planning mechanisms described above at different times and in various ways. Although the overarching objectives for the component will sometimes, in theory, be established in larger venues than a solely civil affairs-focused planning process, civil affairs will need to have done the thinking behind what contribution it can make, and how, in order to contribute effectively to these. The subsequent development of detailed operational plans and strategies for implementation of the objectives will also be a civil affairs responsibility.

In the next section there is a tool for helping Civil Affairs Officers to conduct a planning exercise in a mission environment. But it is worth remembering that the basic components of a strategy are simply:

(i) A prioritized list of objectives and desired outcomes.
(ii) A set of planned activities, taking account of the real resources available and all contextual constraints.
(iii) A clear logic that links the two.

Importantly, a strategy is not just a document or a logframe. While documentation is an important part of strategy design, the strength and validity of the ideas behind that will be most crucial. Both the actual strategies and their documentation are tools and should be useful, rather than seen as an end in themselves.

The main planning tool used by the component is usually the workplan, however, this frequently stops short of being *strategic*, often simply listing outputs and objectives. A core element of the workplan, or any other plan, should be information about the

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logic and reasoning between the levels. In other words, in order to be strategic, a plan needs to include detailed explicit reasoning that links day-to-day activities with the ultimate goals and objectives of the mission. The programme logic, or detailed reasoning and assumptions behind any plan of action, is the core of strategic planning and needs to be made explicit and documented. Not only does this quickly expose any flaws or weaknesses in the logic, it also makes it easier to identify whether there are alternative pathways to achieving the expected accomplishment or the objective itself. The chain of causality also becomes a basis for constant review and refinement of the strategy as circumstances change.

A basic model for strategic planning

The steps outlined below are intended to map out a possible planning process within the context of a UN Field Mission, whether at the individual, team or component level. Managers should be able to use these steps to help them to apply the three basic components of a strategic plan mentioned above in navigating the various mechanisms and processes used in UN peacekeeping.

A planning process should always start with the broadest objectives and work its way down. It is worth noting that, although the model below sets out the steps sequentially,

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50 The terms “outcome” or “sub-objective” are often used here, although “expected accomplishment” is the term generally used in the UN peacekeeping context.
the reality of planning is often a little different, and objectives may be set in advance or several of the early steps take place simultaneously as the analysis unfolds.

**Step 1 → Conduct a conflict analysis**
All planning should be based on and make reference to prior analysis. See the conflict analysis model above, page 106.

**Step 2 → Define objectives**
An objective is an overall desired achievement. Another term that is often used here is “goal”. Sometimes these higher order objectives for the component (or team, or individual) have been established in advance, but even if they have not, it is advisable to align the language with Security Council mandates, national programmes, higher order component workplans etc.

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**From the toolkit:**

**Tips on defining objectives**

- An objective should describe a desired change at the sociopolitical level (e.g. “Increased authority of the state at the local level in country X”).

- It is not necessary to explicitly include the civil affairs role (e.g. “To contribute to increasing the authority of the state at the local level in country X” or “To strengthen the capacity of national actors to increase the authority of the state at the local level”). Many actors contribute to achieving these broad objectives, and it is understood that civil affairs will be one of them.

- Objectives should identify the change that is desired and the beneficiaries, for example the country, region, group of people etc. The objective itself does not need to explain “how” this will be done (e.g. “To increase the authority of the state at the local level in Country X through improving the perceived legitimacy of local government”).

- Civil affairs objectives should only focus on sociopolitical changes in the host country, not on work that the component may do to support the UN mission or others.

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Box 8.2 From the toolkit: Tips on defining objectives  

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Some of these tips, and several of the other tips and materials in this section, are adapted for civil affairs from the “Planning Toolkit for Rule of Law and Security Institutions Components”, which contains much more detailed guidance on planning processes than covered here.
Step 3 ➔ Define expected accomplishments and their relationship to the objective

An expected accomplishment is a desired outcome or consequence that is expected to contribute to the fulfilment of an overall objective. The terminology can be confusing here, as some people would correctly point out that these are in effect lower order objectives that the component or team intends to achieve en route to achieving the overall objective. Whatever word is used, this is the level at which what the component or team wants to concretely achieve is clearly defined.

From the toolkit:

Tips on defining expected accomplishments

An expected accomplishment should also describe a desired change at the sociopolitical level. It may refer to changes in knowledge, skills, behaviour, awareness, condition or status.

- Start the expected accomplishment with a noun (e.g., “Civil society organizations invited to participate in national level peace negotiations in country X”) or an adjective + noun (e.g. “Improved capacity of local government in conflict mediation in region Y”).

- Try to make the expected accomplishment “SMART”:
  - Specific: specify the benefit to the end-user.
  - Measurable: use an indicator to make the expected accomplishment measurable.
  - Attainable: it can be attained within the life cycle of the UN Field Mission
  - Realistic/relevant: it must fall within the mandate of the UN Field Mission.
  - Time-bound: use an indicator for the expected accomplishment that can be attained or measure change within the time period covered by the plan.

- Expected accomplishments should not be confused with activities, such as: “To facilitate the involvement of civil society in local-level decision-making” or “To support local authority capacity to mediate conflict”.

Box 8.3 From the toolkit: Tips on defining expected accomplishments

It is important to be explicit about how it is understood that this outcome will contribute to achieving the overall objective in question, by spelling out the analysis that has taken place in selecting it. For example, “It is expected that increased transparency in municipal decision-making will help to change perceptions among the local population about the local government, and in particular to increase the sense that that government is operating legitimately. This will contribute to the objective ‘To restore state authority at the local level in country X’ because in order to have authority, it is a prerequisite that the local government is perceived to be legitimate.”
Assumptions can also be spelled out at this point. For example, “The success of this outcome in achieving the objective is based on the following assumptions: (a) making the proceedings of local government more visible will ensure that they operate in a legitimate way; and (b) citizens will be interested in the proceedings of local government if made more visible to them.” It can also be useful to mention which other options were considered and why this one was selected.52

**Step 4 ➔ Generate possible pathways to reaching expected accomplishments**

Once the expected accomplishments have been established, the next step is to brainstorm the possible ways of achieving them. There are usually many different mechanisms by which a particular expected accomplishment can be achieved and this step should generate a range of alternatives, using the prior conflict analysis as a basis. This process should be as creative as possible, consciously open to new ideas and perspectives without judging them. The focus should be on the logic of how things can change, not the detailed questions of implementation. Evaluation of these ideas and discussion of their feasibility and implementation is left for later.

**Step 5 ➔ Identify points of impact and/or leverage for component or team**

As outlined in step 5 of the conflict analysis model, part of the analysis will be to identify possible “points of intervention” on the conflict system by relevant actors (not only the mission, but also actors such as civil society, politicians, other international actors and so on). Now this analysis can be applied to the pathways identified above.

The process should provide some insight into the different kinds of ways in which civil affairs components, or the team or individual conducting the planning exercise, could potentially impact on the situation. What are the points at which an external actor can exert a meaningful influence? Civil affairs components can influence conflict dynamics through direct intervention themselves, or – just as effectively – they can leverage other actors, or “enable” them to have impact. This ability to act as an enabler or catalyst, particularly for national actors, is one of the key features of good civil affairs work.

**Step 6 ➔ Prioritize, evaluate and refine**

After these possible interventions are identified, a more rigorous evaluation and prioritization is needed. The most important criterion in judging an intervention is its potential effectiveness in achieving the defined expected accomplishments and

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52 RPP refers to this process of making explicit the programme logic as identifying the “Theory of Change”, and RPP is a useful resource on why/how to do this at each point in the planning process. They have also developed specific tools to help with identifying and comparing different pathways, as identified in steps 4 and 5. More details on these are provided in the Recommended resources section at the end of this chapter.
objectives. Within this overarching criterion, a number of elements are crucial to consider:

- Is the intervention feasible? How would it work? Who would do what? What is realistic to expect as a result?
- Does civil affairs involvement fill an important gap (in knowledge, analysis, skills, resources, relationships, other)? Are others able to do the job equally well? Can national capacities be supported to do it?
- What resources would be needed? Are these available? Is there a way of using less time, money etc.?
- How would this intervention relate to the other priorities of the mission?
- What unexpected consequences and risks would need to be taken into account, evaluated and mitigated?
- How can difficulties be overcome?

This process is not simply about prioritization of fixed ideas. Instead there needs to be a problem-solving approach of refining each alternative to best fit the criteria, paying special attention to the most innovative and promising alternatives.

The goal of this analysis is to identify where the efforts of civil affairs can best be targeted for greatest effect. (It is worth remembering that prioritizing, in essence, means saying NO to all the other things that you cannot do.)

Step 7 → Devise indicators

Indicators are measures of variables that provide a simple and reasonable basis for assessing progress or impact. They measure whether, and the extent to which, the expected accomplishment has been achieved. Indicators are intended to determine trends over the timeframe covered by the plan, whether in terms of improvement or deterioration.

Where expected accomplishments are clearly defined, indicators may be directly related to them and relatively simple to formulate. For example, for the expected accomplishment “Civil society organizations are invited to participate in national-level peace negotiations in country X”, the indicator is very simple to formulate, simply looking at whether civil society organizations were invited to participate. In other cases the process can also be very direct, for example if the strategy is to get an external actor to do something in particular, the indicator may simply be whether or not they do it.

Indicators may also be derived from the logic of the intended interventions – understanding how it is intended that a change be achieved gives clues as to the best way to measure it.
There are a number of possible sources of data to inform indicators, some of which are more reliable and/or easily accessible than others. Possible sources include:

- **Administrative data** – quantitative information compiled routinely by national institutions, international organizations, civil society groups etc.

- **Field data** – data that is already available in the UN Field Mission or with the UN Country Team, or can be collected by UN field staff.

- **Document review** – information obtained from written documents, such as peace agreements, media reports, published laws, standard operating procedures and
guidelines of national institutions, administrative acts, budgets, fiscal reports and reports from NGOs etc.

- **Survey of experts** – information gathered confidentially from individuals with specialized knowledge based on their experience or professional position using a written questionnaire. Expert surveys should be carefully designed so as to avoid bias.53

- **Public survey** – information gathered from the population in a country in relation to particular issues, whether across the country or in a restricted geographical area. As discussed in section 9.10, these surveys are particularly useful for collecting data about public perceptions.

**Step 8 ➔ Identify activities, timeframes, responsibilities and resources**
The next step is to go into more detail as to how the expected accomplishments will be achieved. This involves mapping out and allocating resources behind the issues that were analysed in step 6. Who will do what? When? What are the different activities that will need to be done? What resources are needed? Responsibilities and resources for monitoring implementation of the plan should also be assigned at this stage. When putting down the concrete plan on paper it is important, again, to make explicit the programme logic that was identified in steps 4 and 5.

**Step 9 ➔ Identify outputs**
Outputs are the “deliverables” produced by the activities, including things like publications, training events, meetings and the provision of advice. There should be a direct causal relationship between the output and the expected accomplishment. In other words, the expected accomplishment (for example, “Increased transparency in municipal decision-making processes”) should be expected to directly result from the output (for example, “Three round-table discussions between civil society and local government on municipal expenditure”). Box 8.5 on the following page provides tips on defining outputs.

**Step 10 ➔ Identify risks and contingencies**
To a certain extent, key risks can be identified by looking at the assumptions that have been identified in making explicit the logic for the plan. For example, if the plan rests on the assumption that “citizens will be interested in the proceedings of local government if made more visible to them”, then one of the risks will be that citizens are not interested in engaging.

53 Further guidance is available in the “Planning Toolkit for Rule of Law and Security Institutions Components” from which this list is drawn.
An output must always be something that is within the capacity of the team/component to deliver and should not be confused with the outputs of others to which the team contributes. For example, a civil affairs team may have a series of five planning meetings with local authorities to help them to develop a strategy on public consultation. The output of the local authorities is a strategy on public consultation. The output of the civil affairs team is “Advice on a strategy for public consultation provided through five planning meetings with local authorities”.

Outputs should not be confused with activities. For example, “monitoring of benchmarks” may be an activity conducted by a civil affairs component, whereas the output is the result of this monitoring, such as a report.

Outputs should also be drafted to make them “SMART”.

Outputs can be made specific and measurable by making reference to:

(a) **Quantity** (e.g. 5 workshops; 20 villages; 100 participants);
(b) **Frequency** (e.g. monthly meetings);
(c) **UN partners involved in jointly implementing** the output; and
(d) **Recipients** of the output (e.g. local authorities, civil society organizations, villages, IDPs).

For example, “Four training courses for 80 local government officials on decentralization, in collaboration with UNCDF and UNDP.”

These risks should be actively evaluated, monitored and mitigated during planning and again continuously during implementation. For the example above, the interest of citizens in engaging should be analysed from the beginning and if such interest is absent or minimal, appropriate steps should be taken or the feasibility of the strategy should be questioned.

However, there are other risks that do not relate to the immediate logic of the plan itself, such as a breakdown in the security environment. It is important to brainstorm on possible risks, and to identify contingency plans for those risks that are considered to be either of high impact or of high probability.
Step 11 ➔ Implement, monitor, update, revise

Once implementation begins, effective management and coordination will be essential to ensure that the process stays on track. Good monitoring is a key part of this. Indicators are one of the ways in which the plan is monitored and it is important to maintain a portfolio of evidence to inform them from day one. It is essential that information about progress is actively analysed so that adjustments can be made, whether to amend the programme or to re-evaluate its feasibility. If something is not working, it is necessary to identify what it is, and where the initial planning logic is breaking down, so that changes can be made.

Given the poor quality of data generally found in post-conflict countries, there will also be a need to be sensitive to anecdotal and subjective information. A range of sources, both internal and external to the mission, can provide hints that suggest a closer look is necessary, including situation reports, views of national authorities, perceptions of the local population, information from the local and international media and so on.

Inevitably, the analysis of the situation will evolve, and plans need to be able to respond to changes and improvements in the understanding of the conflict dynamics. As such, the plan should be regularly reviewed to identify any flaws in the logic or practicality of its goals. It is for this reason that it is critical that planning documents have included the logic and assumptions behind any activities and interventions.

Step 12 ➔ Evaluate the plan

After a plan is completed, a full evaluation is often carried out. Good practice in evaluation suggests that it should be carried out independently of those that developed and implemented the programme or plan. In some cases in peacekeeping missions it may be possible to arrange for an external evaluation to be conducted, but this is rarely the case. It can, however, be extremely valuable for those that have developed and implemented the plan to conduct an assessment of how it went – not only to inform future planning within the mission but also to help other civil affairs components that may be attempting to do similar work in comparable circumstances.54 There are many possible ways of evaluating programmes, however, the OECD/DAC “Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance” can be an excellent reference point for this. The five criteria used are: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability.55


55 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) “Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance”: http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_34435_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html.
## Recommended resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Diana Chigas and Peter Woodrow, <em>Reflecting on Peace Practice: Participant Training Manual</em> (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A training manual containing useful ideas and accessible tools for both analysis and planning, based on lessons collected from practitioners.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th><em>A Theory of Change: A thinking and action approach to navigate in the complexity of social change processes</em></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A guide containing several tools to help planners make their programme logic and assumptions explicit and to analyse them critically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&amp;type=Document&amp;id=4095&amp;source=rss">http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&amp;type=Document&amp;id=4095&amp;source=rss</a></td>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Planning Toolkit for Rule of Law and Security Institutions Components</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A collection of in-depth tools for planning the work of rule of law components in UN Field Missions, including on working with RBB. Tailored to rule of law but also relevant for civil affairs components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Forthcoming: UN peacekeeping personnel will be able to access this document on the POINT intranet: <a href="https://point.un.org/UNHQ/SitePages/POHome.aspx">https://point.un.org/UNHQ/SitePages/POHome.aspx</a></td>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>IMPP Guidelines for the Field</th>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>The required standards for integrated strategy, planning and coordination at the country level. These guidelines are part of the IMPP guidance package, which also includes (1) UN Strategic Assessment and (2) the Role of Headquarters in Integrated Planning for UN Field Presences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>UN peacekeeping personnel can access this document via the Policy and Practices database on the POINT intranet: <a href="http://ppdb.un.org">http://ppdb.un.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Set of criteria to evaluate programmes developed by the OECD/DAC, widely used in international work. The website sets out a list of questions to ask when applying each of the criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td><a href="http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_34435_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html">www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_34435_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UN Strategic Assessment Guidelines</strong></td>
<td>A pre-deployment assessment tool used by the UN to determine options for UN engagement in a post-conflict country. Contains analysis and prioritization tools for use at the macro level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UN System Staff College: Online course on conflict analysis for prevention and peacebuilding</strong></td>
<td>An online course aimed at providing practical conflict analysis skills for professionals working in contexts of deteriorating human security, armed conflict, political crisis and other threats to peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RBB THEORY: What, Why &amp; How</strong></td>
<td>A PowerPoint presentation that explains in simple terms what Results-based Budgeting (RBB) is and how it works.</td>
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