

**PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS AND GENDER
EQUALITY IN POST-CONFLICT
RECONSTRUCTION**

By

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If Peacekeeping Operations are to succeed in ensuring a sustainable peace and long-term reconstruction based on democratic principles and United Nations human rights standards, it is essential that the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination be upheld. In contemporary conflicts, the civilian population increasingly has become the primary war objective and focus of violence, with men and women experiencing conflict differently. Women and children constitute the vast majority of refugee and internally displaced populations, with a marked increase in female-headed households, and little or no representation of women in either peace negotiations, or planning for national reconstruction. United Nations Peacekeeping Operations must guarantee that the protection of women's human rights are central to all actions that promote peace, implement peace agreements, resolve conflict, and reconstruct war-torn societies.

Countries that have been devastated by conflict must be assured a United Nations military and civilian presence that will rebuild war-torn societies in an equitable, non-discriminatory manner and not compound the dislocation. Peacekeepers are bound by the norms, standards and laws, which protect and promote human rights. The actions of peacekeepers have a profound effect on the community - both by way of setting examples, re-enforcing the rule of law and respect for human rights and laying the foundation for a secure and stable future society. The number and position of women in the Mission, in civilian, police and military capacities has been shown to influence the degree of gender sensitivity in operations, enhancing the Mission's capacity to work more effectively with the local populations, which Peacekeeping Operations are increasingly being called upon to do.

In order for Peacekeeping Operations to bring this about, it is important that local societal structures and cultural norms be taken into account. One of the fundamental ways a society and culture is structured is around gender roles, which are not the biological roles of men and women, but rather the socialised roles associated with being male or female in a particular economic, social, political and cultural context. Such socialisation impacts on activities men and women undertake, their access to and control of resources,

as well as the degree to which they participate in decision-making. Due to socialised gender roles, women are the ones with less access to resources, opportunities and decision-making. One of the primary responsibilities of the United Nations is to ensure women's rights, needs, issues, views and voices are not marginalized in the political, economic and social reconstruction of their countries.

Gender Equality and Peacekeeping

As a United Nations operation, a Peacekeeping Mission, under the direction of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), and supported by Department of Peacekeeping (DPKO) Headquarters, should in all its policies and programmes of mandate implementation be addressing Security Council Resolution 1325, *Women, Peace and Security*, which has called upon Peacekeeping Missions to report on mainstreaming gender equality. This requires the application of the 1997 ECOSOC Resolution which defines this as a... *strategy for making women's and girl's, as well as men's and boy's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equality and inequality is not perpetuated*. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality

. Security Council Resolution 1325, *Women, Peace and Security*, requires Peacekeeping Missions integrate gender equality, which requires, in accordance with the specific mandate of a Mission, the development of various mechanisms, resources and capacity-building of field-based personnel about what this implies. Depending on the main focus of the Mission mandate, overseeing peace accords/ceasefires, maintenance of law and order, or the more complex task of nation-building and reconstruction, the approaches to mainstreaming gender equality will vary.

One of the key mechanisms to achieve mainstreaming of gender issues is the establishment of designated Gender Advisers either in Human Rights Units or other key pillars of the Mission or the establishment of operational Gender Units in Missions to mainstream gender equality measures into the main functions of the Mission. The mandate

of the Mission and the location of the Unit/Advisor will shape the functions and capacity to implement Security Council Resolution 1325.

How is this being achieved?

Since the establishment of the first gender advisors and units in Peacekeeping Missions more than two years ago, there has been a noticeable shift in the focus of those Mission mandates to accommodate the rights of women in post-conflict reconstruction. And in retrospect, there is no doubt that having such designated advisers and offices has produced results that have not and would not have been otherwise forthcoming from implementation of the Mission mandate.

The Gender Affairs Unit, established by mid-2000 in the **United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET)** was the first such office in a Peacekeeping Mission to function until the liquidation of the Mission mandate, and provides many concrete examples of what can be achieved when the principle of gender equality is applied to the work of a Peacekeeping Mission. This was a unique mission with a unique mandate; since it was the first time that the United Nations has been called upon to set up an entire government. A critical objective of UNTAET was the preparations for the transfer of administrative power to the East Timorese at independence and establishing conditions for sustainable development.

The key objectives and strategies of the Gender Unit were to mainstream issues raised by East Timorese women, reflecting the ideas, experiences and priorities of women at the national level in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all UNTAET programs, policies and activities. The Unit focused on five core functions: capacity building and awareness raising; gender situational analysis and data collection; policy analysis, implementation and evaluation; rule of law and legislative analysis; networking, and outreach.

- *Capacity-Building in the Mission* was undertaken through Gender Mainstreaming/Sensitization Workshops for participants from UNTAET

departments, district administration gender focal points, the United Nations Agencies and Civil Society Organisations. Since the Gender Unit's mandate not only applied to the development of the Transitional Administration but also to other pillars of the Mission, Gender sensitization training was undertaken for Peacekeeping Forces, Civilian Police and the Timor Loro S'ae Police Service. Training courses to field test gender training materials were held, with the objectives to develop the participants' skills in gender analysis and recognition of the differing needs, capacities and expectations of women and men in the host population and to sensitize them to the implications of their actions and the imperative of respect for human rights. With the establishment of the Training Cell within the Peacekeeping Forces (PKF) pillar of the Mission, gender awareness was incorporated into all induction sessions by military trainers, with the Force Commander requesting the Gender Unit to provide orientation on gender equality issues to both high-level and mid-level management in Peacekeeping Forces.

- *Gender Situational Analysis and Data Collection:* With the support of Ireland Aid, a study entitled, the "A Situational Analysis of Gender in Post Conflict East Timor" was undertaken which examined women's health issues, education, economic empowerment and decision-making was completed, the first study to analyse the differential impact of conflict on women and men.
- As the mandate of UNTAET was to prepare the East Timorese for self-government, it was essential that *legislative analysis* was also undertaken to ensure that gender concerns were reflected in keeping with international human rights standards and norms, which uphold gender equality under the law. One concrete outcome, was amendments and additions to the Transitional Rules of Criminal Procedure with provisions to enhance the ability of the justice system to ensure equal protection for women and men under the law. One important mechanism which facilitated the Gender Unit's effectiveness in mainstreaming gender equality into legislation was the establishment of a Gender and the Law Working Group, which comprised East Timorese judges, prosecutors, public defenders, representatives of Civil Society

Organisations, and agencies as well as gender focal points from Civilian Police and the Office of Legal Affairs.

- *Gender Mainstreaming into the Justice System* was also a major priority. By linking closely in UNTAET with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, Department of Justice, Serious Crimes Unit, Civilian Police (Civpol), the Human Rights Unit, and outside with the Jurist's Association, Fokupers (a women's group) and other human rights organisations, the Gender Affairs Unit produced a policy report to inform the justice system on issues such as gender concerns related to the prisons and women's experiences in the criminal justice system, which led to concrete actions to improve practices, such as supervision of female prisoners by female prison guards.
- In order to ensure that gender mainstreaming could be achieved Mission-wide, *Networking and Outreach* was also a key function of the Gender Unit. It established mechanisms to facilitate the gender mainstreaming process and share information through inter-departmental task forces, a Gender Focal Point (GFP) Network, a United Nations agency task force, and bi-monthly meetings with the East Timorese Women's Network (REDE). Each mechanism sought to strategize on how to more effectively mainstream gender equality, share information, and coordinate activities and projects. Activities included connecting with local women's groups to assist with workshops to raise gender awareness on a range of women's issues, including literacy, education, health, violence against women, and leadership. Gender Focal Points at district level also supported initiatives by local women's and youth groups, including trauma counseling, income generating projects, civic education programs, widow's groups, literacy programs, and participatory education programs in the villages on violence against women.
- *Gender-Based Violence*: With Peacekeeping Operations becoming increasingly responsible for development of civil justice systems and policing, one of the key issues to be addressed in post-conflict reconstruction is that of gender-based violence which is exacerbated by the "culture of violence" and militarisation. In

response to this issue, CivPol established a Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) to deal with victims of rape, domestic violence, as well as any other gender related crimes. The VPU had female officers, and female interpreters dedicated to the unit and built a close working relationship with FOKUPERS, a women's group addressing violence against women and referred women to their shelter. A CivPol officer was designated in each district to be a focal point for gender related crimes. However, CivPol had a shortage of women officers, interpreters and specialists with expertise in the area of violence against women, something which very much needs to be addressed by contributing countries when recruiting for Peacekeeping Operations at the national level. UNTAET launched a nation-wide campaign to address the issue of domestic violence. Support was given at the highest levels by the both the SRSG and Deputy SRSG, the Chief Minister and Justice Minister, CivPol Commissioner and the Advisor for Promotion of Equality. Initiated by UNTAET's Office of Communication and Public Information (OCPI), the campaign raised awareness on how to prevent domestic violence and inform victims about where they can seek help. Posters and public service announcements were produced and the message that violence was unacceptable was being disseminated through Radio, TV and various publications. A workshop to draft domestic violence legislation was held in November 2001, with regional experts working with East Timorese legal and civil society representatives. Civpol and East Timorese Police Service undertook training on domestic violence, with a positive response from government departments, with the establishment of an inter-departmental government task force on domestic violence by the Advisor on Promotion of Equality, to address the issue from a governmental perspective with Departments of Health, Social Services and Justice, as well as CIVPOL and national police.

- *Women and Elections:* Before the elections of 30 August 2001, UNTAET put in place affirmative action measures to ensure a high representation of women to the first freely elected constituent assembly, which would draw up a national constitution. The SRSG, Sergio Vieira de Mello, met with leaders of political parties in May 2001 and urged them to guarantee democratic principles of participation and

place women in winnable positions on their party lists so that they would be equally represented in the Constituent Assembly as well as incorporate women's concerns into their party platforms. Incentives were offered by the SRSG, who noted that parties who incorporated women's concerns into their platforms would be allotted twice as much broadcast time if the additional time were used for women candidates. The SRSG called upon the Gender Affairs Unit to prepare a minimum of 100 women to run for political office. In conjunction with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), training workshops were conducted for 150 potential women candidates, with participants from every district, and representative of all major political parties as well as Civil Society Organisations. A *Women's Caucus Group* was created to support potential women candidates. One of its objectives was to increase the number of women registering as independent candidates and providing them with support and training women's groups at the grassroots level. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the Gender Unit formed a *gender equity working* group and took concrete actions to ensure that women fully participated in the process, not only as candidates and voters, but also as electoral administrators. All objectives and activities of the Voter Education and Training Unit as well as the Public Information Unit of the IEC included gender sensitive timing for all training activities; materials avoiding sexist messages or images; creation of texts that empower women; and designing and conducting special training for women's groups on electoral issues. The outcome of the elections produced a remarkable 27% return of women to the Constituent Assembly, one of the highest, not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but also globally. Following the results of the elections, a new East Timorese government was announced on 15 September 2001 composed of eleven ministers and a Chief minister. Two women were appointed to the ministerial portfolios of Justice and Finance while a third was given the position for Vice-minister for Internal Administration. Two women Advisers were appointed in the Office of the Chief Minister, one for the Promotion of Equality, the other for Human Rights.

- A working group on *Women and the Constitution*, composed of several civil society organisations was formed and, in consultation with the Gender Affairs Unit, organised consultations with women's groups all over the country on basic issues affecting women in East Timor. At the end of this process a Women's Charter of Rights in East Timor was agreed upon, with eight thousand signatures collected mostly from women all over the country supporting the Charter. The Charter was presented to the SRSG on 25 September 2001 by representatives of the Working Group and was later presented to the Members of the Constituent Assembly. Despite limited time and financial resources a nationwide campaign collected over 10,000 signatures in support of the 'Women's Charter of Rights'. The Charter was written by East Timorese women representing different districts and organisations and submitted to the Constitutional Assembly upon its election. The 88 members of the Constitutional Assembly were tasked with the drafting of the Constitution of the new country from September 2001 until March 2001. The Gender Constitutional Working Group monitored the drafting process and advocated for the 'Women's Charter of Rights'. Due to the raising of public consciousness around gender equality and non-discrimination, the resulting Constitution of East Timor, of March 2002, has among the fundamental objectives of the State is *To promote and guarantee the effective equality of opportunities between women and men* and the principle of non-discrimination on grounds of gender is a fundamental principle.
- National Mechanisms at Government Level* National machineries for the advancement of women have been established in almost every Member State of the United Nations, and exist in the form of Ministries of Women's Affairs and/or the Office of Status of Women in every country in the Asia-Pacific region. Following the 2001 election, the final phase of the United Nations Transitional Administration, the East Timor Public Administration (ETPA), the model for the independent government, appointed an Advisor for the Promotion of Equality in the Office of the Chief Minister, who took from the international Head of the former Gender Affairs Unit, which was transformed into the precursor of the women's national machinery. UNTAET is the first Peacekeeping Operation to have an effectively functioning

Gender Affairs Unit that made the transition to a national machinery for women, the Office for the Promotion of Equality in the Prime Minister's office, thereby creating a model for other United Nations peacekeeping missions mandated with establishing a national government.

During the period since Resolution 1325 became a reality in October 2001, other Peacekeeping Operations have appointed gender advisers and established gender units who are developing special programmes to address the issue of gender equality under their specific Mission mandates:

UNMIBH (Bosnia) a Special Trafficking Operation Programme (STOP) was established to combat trafficking and help the young girls/women forced into prostitution. 50 international Police Monitors and 150 local Police Officers are involved. Over the last 14 months, STOP has undertaken more than 700 police raids and inspections, interviewed 2070 women and young girls, rescued more than 230 trafficked victims and close more than half of the country's bars and nightclubs. The number of convicted perpetrators has risen from zero to 80, with most of the women and young girls from Romania, Moldova and Ukraine.

UNAMSIL(Sierra Leone) where the Gender Adviser is in the Human Rights Unit, a collaborative venture between DPKO and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

- **A Women's Task Force** on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been formed to give specific focus to gender-based violence during conflict, and it has recommended a policy of psychosocial support for victims of gender-based violence; the Women's Task Force is working to ensure gender balance in appointments to both the Special Court and Truth and Reconciliation Commission;
- **Research on war-related sexual abuses** is a joint UNAMSIL and NGO undertaking and has focused on the promotion and protection of women's rights in post-conflict. This Report, *War-related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone, the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women*, has documented the violations of women's rights during conflict, which will ensure the visibility of these issues during the transitional justice mechanisms.
- **Training on women's rights and sexual exploitation of vulnerable groups** been carried out with military peacekeepers, Sierra Leone Police and Sierra Leone Armed Forces. To ensure full respect for human rights of women and children, the Gender adviser is training the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police and civil society organisations on CEDAW and the Optional Protocol.

UNMISSET (East Timor) the follow-on Mission to UNTAET, the Gender Adviser is located in the Office of the SRSG, and works closely with the Office of Deputy SRSG, the UN Resident Coordinator, and participates in senior management meetings with SRSG, DSRSG, Chief of Staff, Force Commander, CIVPOL Commissioner and is part of the management coordination committee.

- **Public Information** on gender issues throughout the Mission is created through the newly established Gender website, on the Intranet SRSG site, and in cooperation with the Office of Public Information, the office of the Gender Adviser is producing a documentary on the work of the new national machinery for women, the Office for the Promotion of Equality. Special UNMISSET funded-programmes for radio and television are

addressing issues such as the socialization campaigns on domestic violence.

- **UNMISSET Inter-Agency Group on Gender** has been established with representatives from UNMISSET's CIVPOL, Office of the Force Commander, Human Rights, Legal Office, Public Information, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, UNVs, UNOPS, ILO and FAO, and is coordinated by the Gender Adviser. The objective is to promote gender mainstreaming throughout the work of the United Nations in East Timor.
- **Human Rights** - the Gender Adviser has supported the Office for the Promotion of Equality to lead a public information campaign to promote a better understanding of the CEDAW Convention. Following the visit of the former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, the Office of the High Commissioner has recommended increasing reports to prosecute cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse against women.

MONUC (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

A Gender Section has been established in the Office of the SRSR and is focusing on:

- **Inter-Congolese Dialogue** – the Gender Section has undertaken consultations with Congolese civil society organisations and media to examine common visions and strategies to develop a common civil society platform to advance the peace process. The Senior Gender Adviser accompanied the DSRSR to the Pretoria Agreement Ceremony and the end of July and raised gender-related issues with senior management and military;
- **DDRRR** – the Gender Section has participated in meetings of the DDRRR (Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction), contributing to the MILOBS reporting guidelines to ensure exact number of female ex-combatants and dependents.
- **Training** - the Gender Section, in conjunction with the Human Rights Unit has undertaken gender awareness training for military observers, as

well as inductions for civilian staff. The Senior Adviser is cooperating with the CIVPOL Commissioner and staff preparing the Kisangani training programme for local police.

- **Inter Agency Cooperation** – the Gender Section is cooperating with UNHCR and USAID to develop a gender strategy supporting gender-related governance and communications projects relating to the peace process.
- **Outreach** –the Senior Gender adviser has undertaken gender awareness briefings with civilian, military and CIVPOL in Kisangani and Goma, and held consultations with women leaders and civil society representatives to develop initiatives for the peace process.
- **Future Focus** – The Gender Section will now begin to turn its attention to building national capacity for equal participation of women in the transitional institutions.

In conclusion, it is now becoming concretely evident what application of a gender equality approach in a United Nations Peacekeeping Operation can achieve. The Mission is uniquely placed in a conflict and post-conflict environment to undertake a primary catalytic role for transformation in rebuilding war-torn societies. In conjunction with other United Nations partners, international organizations, and civil society groups, particularly national and local women's organizations, the Peacekeeping Operation can initiate and enhance a process based on the principle of non-discrimination as upheld in the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Security Council Resolution 1325 and ensure that women's rights are addressed.

