

Issue Brief

Gender Unit & the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

July 2002

In Security Council resolution 1325, Member States urge the incorporation of a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations and urge the Secretary-General to include gender components in field operations. In the same resolution, the Security Council calls on all actors to adopt a gender perspective in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, and expresses its willingness to ensure that missions take into account gender considerations. In addition, the Security Council requests that the Secretary-General provide training for civilian and military personnel involved in peacekeeping operations on the particular needs of women and the importance of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Moreover, the resolution calls for regular reporting by the Secretary-General on gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping missions.

Taking into account the Brahimi Report and the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, the Secretary-General presented a Programme Budget Implication asking for resources for three posts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to work on gender and peacekeeping issues.

Unfortunately, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) rejected this request because they perceived a lack of coherent policy in the Secretariat regarding the role of Departments on gender issues. In response, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women mapped out the mandates and responsibilities of various offices for gender mainstreaming and the specific need and role for a gender unit at DPKO.

Gender expertise is needed at UN Headquarters as well as in field missions to incorporate gender perspectives into all missions from the mandates and terms of reference to operating manuals and training programmes. A Gender Unit based at DPKO Headquarters is an appropriate and necessary mechanism to coordinate and support effective gender mainstreaming from Headquarters to the field missions. Since turnover is high among field and military personnel in missions, Senior Gender Advisors also ensure sustainability.

A consultant has been hired by DPKO to develop tools and guidelines for gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping missions. She will focus on resource development, capacity building at Headquarters, and capacity-building and evaluation in a participatory process with partners in the field. The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues also hired a consultant to examine the issue of ACABQ and budgetary allocations for the Gender Unit, emphasizing the need for appropriate resource allocation to move from the rhetoric to practice.

The perception of a lack of coherent policy on gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping highlights the need for more understanding and integration of gender perspectives at DPKO. This would be a key role for the Gender Unit. In the field, the absence of women and their perspectives in peace negotiations, post-conflict reconstruction, disarmament, humanitarian relief and peacebuilding may mean the absence of sustainable peace and any chance of human security.

Impact of Gender Mainstreaming

The positive outcome in the UN peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), Kosovo (UNMIK), and East Timor (UNTAET) was made possible thanks to the efforts and dedication of three outstanding Senior Gender Advisors, despite the lack of institutional support.

In East Timor, the Gender Affairs Unit of UNTAET was directly responsible for facilitating an incredible increase of women's participation in decision-making from the local to the national level. At least one third of candidates elected to the national assembly were women, in addition to two female cabinet members, 50 percent women chosen for Village Development Councils, and 30 percent women in the police forces. The Gender Affairs Unit offered training workshops for potential women candidates in elections. Moreover, the Unit provided training for civil police and larger networks of actors to build the capacities to integrate gender into their work.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Senior Gender Advisor in MONUC enabled the participation of women as part of civil society meetings with visiting ambassadors of the Security Council. Moreover, the advisor facilitated women's groups being able to organize and prepare for peace negotiations. She also facilitated exchange with the women from the DRC and women from other conflict regions.

In Kosovo, women's organizations received some attention and were able to communicate their stories of conflict and perspectives on peacebuilding with visiting Security Council ambassadors to feed into the peace process due to efforts of the Gender Advisor in UNMIK.

Gender Advisors can also create mechanisms to include gender perspectives and women in training and other aspects of peacekeeping. For example, including women of civil society in training of peacekeeping and military personnel helps address issues of sexual violence and cultural and gender sensitivity.

There is no official channel of communication between the Senior Gender Advisors in missions and DPKO Headquarters; as a result, these Gender Advisors do not know to whom to turn to when they are in need of support or to request information and advice. In addition, there is no clear picture of what is going on as regards gender-related issues in other peacekeeping missions that do not have a Gender Advisor. This is the critical gap which needs to be filled by the Gender Unit.

The DPKO Training and Evaluation Service has developed a training of trainers package for gender training in peacekeeping operations that was done in several missions. Acknowledging the need for training materials, the DPKO drew upon and significantly adapted training courses created by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) to use in training military personnel and civilian police participating in United Nations' peacekeeping operations. The objective was twofold: designing materials for pre-deployment training delivered by Member States and providing a gender training to be incorporated in to induction courses conducted by the Training Cells at the mission level. The gender training was field-tested in Bosnia, East Timor, and Eritrea before being consolidated and delivered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Sierra Leone last year.

Without the proper support, expertise, and follow through of a high-level Gender Advisor and a Gender Unit, the gender module may be taken off the compulsory induction training in the field. For example, this happened recently when the gender training module of the induction course was recently removed from the mission in Eritrea. A Gender Affairs Unit at Headquarters and in the field can ensure the gender mainstreaming standards and mandates that have been adopted by 189 Member States since 1995 and unanimously adopted by the Security Council in 2000 through Resolution 1325.

Interim Measures

Pending the creation of a Gender Affairs Unit at UN headquarters through its budget approval, DPKO should allocate resources and senior staff to work on gender issues on a full time basis. A Gender Expert could be assigned to the Under Secretary-General's Front Office to start working on developing a

mechanism for consultation between the Senior Gender Advisors in peacekeeping missions and DPKO HQ, in cooperation with all key partners (DPA, OSAGI, UNIFEM, NGO Working Group etc.).

As NGOs, there are many ways we can facilitate, support, and monitor commitments made to work towards gender balance and gender mainstreaming in the realm of peace and security:

- Advocacy
- Request representatives in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly to prioritize the budget issues to enable requested personnel with gender expertise at DPKO in October
- Request representatives of the ACABQ to allocate resources for a Gender Affairs Unit in DPKO prior to March meetings
- Request Gender Focal Points and experts when working with UN offices
- Educate and Inform
- Publish shadow reports on gender perspectives on conflicts
- Offer training in the field to build women's capacities to participate in decision-making at all levels and access the UN system
- Disseminate information about the resolution directly to national and regional bodies involved in decision-making, especially those in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict
- Ensure gender-sensitive guidelines for reporting in your organization
- Encourage dialogue on the importance of women's presence as personnel in peacekeeping operations through media
- Subscribe to the 1325 newsletter through info@peacewomen.org to be informed of issues on women, peace and security
- Network and share information
- Disseminate best practices in gender-sensitive training
- Encourage women's organizations at all levels to prepare and submit suggested candidates for decision-making positions, especially in conflict zones and including refugee women
- Send information about 1325 related activities and analysis to info@peacewomen.org
- Remain actively seized on the matter with the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security