10 Steps to Increase Women's Participation in Peacekeeping and Reduce Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Despite United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions 1325, 2106 and 2122, peacekeeping operations still fall short in terms of recruitment and systematic and sustained inclusion of women peacekeepers.

Research indicates that even an increase from no women peacekeepers to 5% women peacekeepers can reduce incidences of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by troops by some 50%.[1] Additionally, there is ample evidence that the presence of women in community security roles, including in peacekeeping operations, can reduce violence in communities and foster a greater sense of safety, particularly among war-traumatized women and children.

Here are 10 practical steps to improve community security and eradicate Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) from peacekeeping missions through effective recruitment and deployment of women:

1. *Troop contributing countries (TCCs):* Initiate outreach, including through UN Mobile Training Teams, to brief TCCs at Ministerial level, and inform young women and women in uniform about the opportunities in peacekeeping and benefits of women's participation.

2. *Troop contributing countries (TCCs):* Ensure a trained military Gender Adviser supports efforts to increase the number of women deploying on peacekeeping missions as well as broader responsibilities linked to UNSCR1325.

3. *Troop contributing countries (TCCs):* Change home leave policies to enable more regular rotations so peacekeepers can return to their families, and consider child care support for those leaving young families.

4. *States that fund peacekeeping:* Fast track funding of TCCs that have minimum 20% women ready for deployment; and provide incentives for those deploying more women, including support for logistical issues (e.g. housing/sanitation for women) and recognition by the UN SG and DPO USG.

5. *States that fund peacekeeping:* Develop and support a UN/multi-country women's peacekeepers institute for women in uniform and others with military training, such as non-state actors and civilians; and regional women's peacekeeping training centers.

6. Ensure all training emphasizes protection and respect for local people, with a focus on women's and children's specific needs by:

   a. Revising all pre-deployment training programs and inviting home country CSOs to implement mandatory SEA training/awareness for all troops; and

   b. Inviting women-led CSOs from the receiving countries to implement training for peacekeepers about the context, culture and conditions in their country and ways to ensure protection and respect for communities, particularly those most at risk of SEA.

7. Shift the fear and shame of SEA from victims to would-be perpetrators by:

   a. Enforcing existing zero-tolerance policies with immediate quarantine for peacekeepers implicated in SEA; and

   b. Informing peacekeepers that their families will be notified of their alleged misconduct.

8. Develop communications materials to inform communities of the arrival of peacekeepers, including their mandates and codes of conduct.

9. Set up a community liaison system, ensuring women's inclusion, to:

   a. Provide a safe mechanism for reporting abuse; and

   b. Allow for regular check-ins and updates from the community.

10. Ensure mission deployment allows for male/female patrolling, taking into consideration that all-female units are helpful in some situations but not sufficient.

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[1] Karim, S., & Beardsley, K. (2016). Explaining sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions: The role of female peacekeepers and gender equality in contributing countries. *Journal of Peace Research*, 53(1), 100–115. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343315615506