



Thematic Series on Building More Effective UN Peace Operations

*Protection of Civilians and Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence:
Scenario-Based Training in Peacekeeping Operations*

Background Paper

Since first appearing in the mandate for the UN Mission in Sierra Leone in 1999, the protection of civilians (PoC) has grown to become a core task of multidimensional peacekeeping missions. It is included in the mandate of eight of the UN's sixteen current peacekeeping operations. However, a number of recent events – in environments as diverse as the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Syria – have underscored the critical challenges that missions continue to face in implementing this difficult task.

Peacekeeping operations undertake a number of activities under PoC mandates including monitoring, preventing and responding to incidents, and supporting host countries in strengthening their protection capacities. In their efforts to physically protect, peacekeeping operations also establish the security conditions for developing robust rule of law and security systems. These environments are often very fluid, with peacekeepers operating in highly insecure and rapidly changing situations. In addition, the deployment of a peacekeeping operation can substantially raise expectations of the population while the mission struggles to balance its protection duties – fulfilled with limited resources – against the wide range of additional tasks it is mandated to undertake.

Conflict-related sexual violence has progressively become a more important component of peacekeepers' protection activities. As civilians are increasingly likely to be victims of violent conflict, women and children have come under increasing threat of sexual violence perpetrated by parties to the conflict. In response, a series of Security Council resolutions recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a matter of international peace and security and elaborate ways to prevent and respond to it.¹ The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and UN Women engaged in efforts to further strengthen peacekeeping's response to sexual violence. In addition, the mandates of many current peacekeeping operations now include efforts to address sexual violence as a component of the missions' work to protect civilians.

Peacekeeping operations must balance these core roles with the growing expectation that they operate with greater efficiency, highlighting the important role that conceptual development and training play in deploying peacekeepers to missions mandated to protect civilians. In recent years DPKO and the Department of Field Support (DFS) have taken important steps to strengthen

¹ See Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1960.

doctrinal understanding and training provided to military, civilian police and other civilian staff in its missions to ensure that peacekeepers in the field are well informed and sufficiently prepared to take on PoC activities and understand the impact of conflict-related sexual violence.

The Operational Concept on PoC was developed in 2010 and sought to provide clarification and guidance for peacekeeping missions. It divides PoC into three mutually reinforcing tiers: protection through political processes, protection from physical violence, and establishing a protective environment. It also led to the development of a framework for mission-specific strategies, prompting the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to revise their PoC strategies. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) are also preparing PoC strategies. The Secretariat also developed a resources and capabilities matrix to identify resources necessary and available for carrying out PoC activities as well as to highlight possible protection activities. In addition, the position of PoC Coordination Officer at UN Headquarters was created to support all of these efforts within the UN.

To further strengthen understanding of PoC and sexual violence issues, in 2011 DPKO and DFS developed specialized operational level training materials on the protection of civilians and the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence. The modules were developed in consultation with troop and police contributing countries, field missions, and humanitarian NGOs and other protection actors. The modules are designed to serve five goals:

1. Develop a shared understanding of “protection” and how it differs from other peacekeeping tasks;
2. Establish standards for how peacekeeping operations plan and implement their protection activities;
3. Develop an understanding of roles and responsibilities between civilian, police and military staff on protection issues;
4. Strengthen planning and awareness around protection and vulnerabilities;
5. Identify the challenges facing peacekeeping staff in the field and best practices for prevention and response.
6. Equip peacekeeping staff with tools to respond to protection concerns.

Four initial training modules on broad aspects of PoC, legal dimensions and planning set the basis for more deep discussion on the two subsequent modules: conflict-related sexual violence and the set of 12 detailed scenario-based exercises.

The conflict-related sexual violence training module provides peacekeepers with an overview of the nature of sexual violence in conflict, assessing its impacts at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. It explains how sexual violence is incorporated into the mandates of peacekeeping missions and describes key terminology. It also provides an overview of military command mechanisms linked to the protection of civilians with a focus on sexual violence. To further develop key concepts the module includes a number of hypothetical situations for peacekeepers to analyze.

The final module of the training package is a set of scenario-based exercises designed to simulate a wide range of environments. The scenarios take place in a fictional country but are based on real situations that demonstrate challenges confronting peacekeepers in the field. The scenarios are also

designed with different levels of complexity, with the most advanced geared towards senior mission leadership. Following from these standard training materials, DPKO and DFS are also developing tactical-level mission-specific training modules and scenarios for MONUSCO, UNAMID, UNOCI and UNMISS, as well as training for infantry battalions.

While a number of steps are still needed to further clarify how peacekeeping operations implement PoC mandates and strengthen their capacity to prevent and respond to threats to civilians and conflict-related sexual violence, including the development of guidance and benchmarks, the development and dissemination of training materials is an important initiative in strengthening the capacity of peacekeeping operations to protect civilians in the field.

Guiding Questions

This peacekeeping thematic series is designed to familiarize member states and peacekeeping stakeholders with these training materials. Participants are encouraged to consider the following questions during the presentations.

- What are the most significant constraints limiting peacekeepers' ability to undertake PoC and respond to sexual violence activities? What are the tools available to senior mission leadership to overcome constraints and strengthen response activities?
- What opportunities exist to further strengthen a shared understanding of protection of civilians and prevention and response to sexual violence in peacekeeping contexts? What are the challenges?
- How can best practices and lessons learned be best captured?
- How do these training modules differ from similar training resources? Beyond peacekeeping staff, what other stakeholders would benefit from these scenario-based exercises?