



# UNPLEASANT TRUTH

## Sexual Exploitation in the UN Peace Keeping Operation

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# Introduction

- Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse cast a dark shadow over the positive impacts that UN peacekeepers have made.
- The policies and guidelines set by UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) about sexual exploitation and abuse in missions are not always followed in the field.
- UN has taken significant steps to address the problem; but reports of abuse and exploitation continue.
- While experts on the issue often focus mostly on military personnel, the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse by civilian personnel may be much larger *yet less visible*.

# Post Conflict Socio-Political Landscape

- General Sense of Insecurity
- Fragile Social Environment
- Resource Scarcity
- Fragmented and Broken Families
- Post Conflict Traumatic Disorder
- Gender Imbalance
- Changed gender roles (e.g. women started working in predominantly male professions)
- Gender-based violence



# UN Peace Keeping Deployment

- The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) currently is implementing 17 missions in an effort to restore peace and stability, protect civilians, and facilitate the enforcement of human rights and humanitarian standards in some of the planet's most dangerous places.
- Numbering over 100,000 troops and civilians, UN peacekeeping staff have been deployed to protect the most basic rights and freedoms of people traumatized by conflict.



# The First Allegation

- In 2004, allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) levied against UN uniformed and civilian peacekeepers based in Bunia, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Allegations of sexual misconduct by UN peacekeeping personnel go back at least as far as the 1992–93 deployment in Cambodia.
- Alarm about the involvement of UN peacekeepers in sex trafficking first became widespread during the 1990s when investigators found soldiers were customers in brothels run in Bosnia and Kosovo which relied on women sold into forced prostitution. One recent estimate suggested up to 2,000 women have been coerced into sex slavery in Kosovo. (The Guardian)



# Pattern of Sexual Exploitation

- Individual Exploitation
- Group Exploitation
- Rape and Group Rape
- Sex Slavery
- Prostitute Trafficking
- Prostitution

“The number of places in Kosovo where trafficked women and girls may be exploited, such as nightclubs, bars, restaurants, hotels and cafes, has increased from 18 in 1999 to more than 200 in 2003. ” (BBC 2004)



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## Some Reports on Exploitation

- Refugees International (RI) has found that the UN peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Haiti are equally vulnerable to such abuse.
- Some U.N. officials and outside observers say there have been cases of abuse in almost every U.N. mission, including operations in Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Kosovo. (The Washington Post)
- In Gbarnga, peacekeepers were seen patronizing a club called Little Lagos, "where girls as young as 12 years of age are engaged in prostitution, forced into sex acts and sometimes photographed by U.N. peacekeepers in exchange for \$10 or food or other commodities."  
(According to the letter of UNICEF wrote Feb. 8 to the mission)



## Some Reports (contd.)

- Widespread abuses in 2001 in Kosovo and Bosnia, where U.N. police operated brothels and trafficked women from Eastern Europe to engage in prostitution. (The Washington Post)
- Members of the UN Mission in Congo (MONUC) have been accused of soliciting prostitution and exchanging money and food for sex with refugees some as young as 12.
- In Haiti, the BBC's Mike Williams spoke to a street girl as young as 11 who had reported sexual abuse by peacekeepers. (The BBC News)
- In the DRC, peacekeepers offered abandoned orphans small gifts - as little as two eggs from their rations, says the report - for sexual encounters. (the Guardian)



# Exploitation Tactics

- Lure of love (false hope)
- Assurance of security (for individual or even family)
- Provision of resources: food, drinks etc.
- Safe shelters
- Safe passages
- Money or financial support to individual or family
- 'Soft' prostitution
- The Charisma of a soldier (the Savior)
- Blackmail
- Love child
- The charm of good life



# Factors Contributing Sexual Exploitation

- General sense of immunity
- Lack or non respect for legal regime
- Disrespect or lack of understanding of the local customs and traditions
- Disunity of the central command
- National contingent pride: need to hide the truth
- Lack of transparency and oversight beyond the force structure
- Short term recruitment and lack of accountability
- Availability of money and resources



# Impacts

- It is damaging the credibility of the UN mission and UN image and contribution in upholding peace and stability in the war torn countries.



## Impacts (contd.)

- Gross-human rights violation
- Sexual exploitation by peacekeepers may threaten the security of missions exposing them to blackmail and violent retaliation.
- It also speeds the transmission of HIV Aids and other forms of sexual diseases.



## Impacts (contd.)

- Women and children are the primmest victims.
- Victims frequently suffer from psychological trauma as a result of their experiences.
- Victims and abandoned peacekeeper babies may face stigmatization by their families and communities which deprive them of all support.



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# Prosecutions



- The UN's own figures show
  - 316 peacekeeping personnel in all missions have been investigated,
  - dismissal of 18 civilians,
  - repatriation of 17 members of Formed Police Units and
  - 144 repatriations or rotations home on disciplinary grounds.

## Steps Taken by the UN

- Since 2003 all UN peacekeeping staff have been bound to the *Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13)*.
- Following the scandal in Bunia, appointment of Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid al-Husseini of Jordan to be the first Adviser on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN Peacekeepers.
- In March 2005 the *Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (A/59/710)* was presented to the General Assembly.
- The UN established a headquarters-based Conduct and Discipline Unit in New York, for consistent, reliable record keeping, reporting of allegations and of the status of investigations.



## Steps Taken (contd.)

- A revised *Standard Memorandum of Understanding* between Troop Contributing Countries and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, granting the UN the right to start investigations into allegations of abuse and exploitation where the TCC is unable or unwilling to do so itself.
- A *Comprehensive strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff or related personnel (A/60/817)* is currently under consideration by member states.
- Appointment of a female Special Representative to the Secretary-General to lead the UN peacekeeping mission in Burundi, inclusion of gender advisors on assessment missions, and increased importance of the office of gender advisors within peacekeeping missions.





## Problem with UN Jurisdiction over Peacekeepers

- Military peacekeepers are not employed directly by the UN.
- Seconded to peacekeeping service by UN Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), which retain jurisdiction over the discipline of their troops.
- A military peacekeeper found to have a credible charge against him can only be prosecuted and punished by his home government.
- The UN can do little more than repatriate staff found to have committed acts of abuse and exploitation, leaving victims without any knowledge of action taken against their assailants.
- This limits the UN's ability to enforce standards of behavior in its missions and can fuel perceptions that the organization condones or ignores sexual abuse.

# Ways to Control the Situation

- Strict legal regimes
- The Special Representatives to the Secretary-General (SRSG) in UN peacekeeping missions as well as all managers must be held accountable for ensuring that sexual exploitation and abuse are taken seriously and perpetrators are punished
- Clear pre-deployment guidelines
- Unified command
- Standardization and professionalization of their reporting and investigation mechanisms with regards to the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.



## Ways to Control (contd.)

- Punitive actions in the site of deployment
- More training in gender awareness and reporting mechanisms and punishments within the UN for violations
- Cultural and traditional education of the countries peacekeepers are sent to.
- Transparency of actions
- Balanced work life
- Increasing the number of female peacekeepers
- Recognition of women's role in peacemaking process (empowerment)



# Conclusion

*“The blue helmet has become black and blue through self-inflicted wounds. We will not sit still until the lustre of that blue helmet is restored.”*

-Ms. Jane Holl Lute, assistant secretary-general for peacekeeping



Questions

and

Comments





Thank You

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