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Research focusing on gendered relations in PSOs remains under-developed, not least because of the unwillingness of many funding bodies to become involved in this sensitive and potentially provocative issue. It is for this reason that the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) has taken a particularly bold step in supporting the research presented here. In many ways, their support might be considered somewhat risky, as similar research has invoked an angry backlash from those agencies and organisations perceived to be under attack as a consequence of researchers efforts to illuminate aspects of their shortcomings; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/Save the Children Fund UK (UNHCR/SCFUK) report of 2002 is a case in point. Ultimately, the presentation of a balanced account that seeks to capture sensitive issues whilst providing constructive input into current UN gender strategies, has been a collaborative enterprise and could not have been achieved by the principal researcher alone. To these ends, Vanessa Kent at the ISS has provided a key role in ensuring that the transition from raw data to research monograph has been achieved expertly. Her input has been crucial, in particular her understanding of the ways in which such material might be presented in a way to best maximise its impact.

Paul Higate
27 Nov 03

FOREWORD

The UN remains the pre-eminent international organization with the authority to maintain international peace and security as mandated in Chapters VI and VII of the United Nations Charter. Since the end of the cold war, UN peacekeeping has become increasingly complex and multi-dimensional, requiring a variety of civilian, police, and military actors. Peacekeeping environments therefore necessitate interaction between UN personnel and civilian populations. As such, a successful operation should ensure the local population reports positive interaction with peacekeepers and other UN personnel.

Unfortunately, this has not always been the case, and allegations of peacekeeper misconduct have emerged from nearly every mission of the past two decades. There have been reports of, and investigations into, allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) committed by those with the mandate to protect civilians and abide by the highest standards of integrity while in the service of the UN. However, the UN currently finds itself in a difficult position as it has limited capacity and authority to react. It remains a national responsibility to repatriate and judge those alleged to have committed acts of SEA. The Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping, Mr Jean-Marie Guéhenno, recently stated at the Open Meeting of the Security Council on UN Resolution 1325 that all missions would soon develop an active strategy to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse. Focal points would also be established in each mission to receive and pursue complaints of misconduct. To be successful, however, training, reporting and follow-up mechanisms must be in place to sustain and strengthen the UN's strategies.

There are a variety of key documents that highlight the importance of ensuring that gender issues be mainstreamed in all aspects of peacekeeping operations, from the earliest stages of a mission's inception through to its creation, deployment and closure. Gender mainstreaming, which aims to "ensure that the concerns of men and women are factored into the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and

programmes in all spheres of the mission”, can improve the effectiveness of operations, as women and men, boys and girls, experience conflict differently. Thus, they all bring different perspectives, experiences and strategies to identify and address the root causes of the conflict. However, the term ‘gender’ is still considered a ‘soft’ issue, as opposed to a ‘core’ function of a UN mission. Changing some of these attitudes has been, and will continue to be, a challenge. Importantly, increased support from the strategic and decision-making levels of the UN has encouraged a steady revolution within the UN system that aims to place gender at the forefront of its strategies, rather than include it as an afterthought.

The establishment of accountable and transparent response strategies, as well as effective institutional arrangements to protect and prevent SEA, are long overdue. Only when these mechanisms are in place will the UN be in a position to proactively prevent cases of abuse and exploitation, rather than react to allegations. It is up to the UN and troop-contributing countries to implement agreed standards and policies on gender mainstreaming and take rapid, remedial action against those alleged to have perpetrated crimes. As one of the most widely accepted sources of international legitimacy, the UN must take care to uphold and preserve its reputation by prosecuting perpetrators. Irrespective of current policies that call for ‘zero tolerance’ and upholding ‘codes of conduct’, exploitation and abuse continues. Tolerating these acts allows perpetrators to carry on with impunity. Local populations and host governments can therefore only assume tacit acceptance of such activities.

While sexual exploitation and violence has become a common feature in peacekeeping contexts among state and non-state actors, this monograph focuses on peacekeepers and the alleged abuse of power that they exert over the local population. Many of the findings are anecdotal and based on short visits in mission areas. Recommendations are based on extant UN policies and do not comprehensively reflect the views of civil society organisations, the host governments or local women leaders. The monograph does, nevertheless, represent an insight into the challenges faced by women in conflict and post-conflict environments, and highlights best practices aimed at stemming the on-going exploitation and abuse being committed by those with the responsibility to protect.

We sincerely hope that the ideas and perceptions of the author are taken in the spirit with which the research was conducted: to stimulate debate and discussion. While there exist many tools and mechanisms that aim to protect

and preserve the role women in society, the challenge remains to hold host governments, the UN, and armed groups accountable for the implementation of these recommendations. Women should be seen as stakeholders both during times of war, as well as in the peace. In fact, including women's perspectives and experiences can ensure a representative and sustainable peace.

Vanessa Kent

Pretoria, November 2003

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender relations in Peace Support Operations (PSOs) are increasingly under the spotlight within the context of reports of the sexual abuse of local women by peacekeepers across the range of missions, involving a diversity of national military representatives. This monograph, based on a small-scale exploratory and qualitative study of the PSOs in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) and Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in April and May 2003, aims to contribute towards this evidence base together with understandings of the exploitative aspects of gendered relations in these two African PSOs. The report is concerned with gender issues, with a focus on the dynamic between privileged and powerful peacekeepers and local women and girls. Thus, findings presented here should not be considered as representative of the range of gendered relations in PSOs, but rather, are intended to deepen understanding of the factors driving prostitution and allied forms of exploitation in PSOs.

In highlighting the current environment surrounding sexual abuse and exploitation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone, the study involved in-depth interviews with 45 peacekeepers, UN civilian personnel and members of the civil society, together with a significant number of informal discussions and ethnography in and around the leisure sites of UN personnel and peacekeepers. The research focus reflected the particular conditions in the respective PSOs. In the DRC, the following themes were explored: the context of the PSO, the culture and attitude of UN personnel and peacekeepers towards the host population and *vice versa*, interpretations of the concept of gender, consideration of gender raising strategies – including gender training, peacekeepers engagement with prostitutes and the functioning and understanding of the Code of Conduct. In Sierra Leone, there was a focus on the context of this particular PSOs in terms of the legacy of, and response to the UNHCR/SCFUK report (2002) detailing allegations of sexual abuse of refugees by humanitarian workers and peacekeepers, the workings of the UNAMSIL Personal Conduct Committee (UPCC), prostitution involving peacekeepers, and finally, gendered relations and peacekeeper national culture.

One of the more significant similarities between the post conflict settings of the DRC and Sierra Leone concerned the ways in which women and children (and some men) had been sexually abused through the use of mass rape of the young and old. This 'instrument of war' resonated widely throughout the more vulnerable elements of the population, causing considerable long-term psychological and physical damage. Within the DRC, and less obviously in Sierra Leone, members of the civil society made the observation that peacekeepers occupied a powerful and privileged position, particularly when considering the vulnerabilities of a large number of the populace. The research highlights the impression on behalf of local populations that a number of peacekeepers and UN personnel encountered during the course of the study displayed 'expatriate' views and beliefs and conveyed a position of authority and power over a host population. Moreover, the issue of sharp financial disparity between peacekeepers and host populations provides peacekeepers with an opportunity to exert power and authority over those weakened by conflict and thus vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Implementing gender training strategies, such as in MONUC, while difficult to appraise, is a more proactive approach to stemming SEA. In Sierra Leone, however, while awareness of the 'gender issue' was greater than in the DRC—not least through the work of the UPCC—the lack of a Gender Affairs Office and full-time dedicated officer implies that the mission is more reactive to allegations of SEA. Both PSOs, not unlike other missions, were characterised by the existence of a 'peacekeeping economy' that sustained a range of gendered relations including those understood to be more exploitative. The extremes of inequality that developed in tandem with evidence of a colonial disposition towards the host population represented the political economy of UN intervention in these PSOs.

Evidence for continuing sexual exploitation was apparent in both PSOs. In the DRC, it appeared that peacekeeper-local woman liaisons were considerably less discrete than those occurring in Sierra Leone. Here there was evidence that the UNHCR/SCFUK report had both positive and negative outcomes in terms of raising awareness, whilst driving some exploitation underground. The impact of national cultures was also evident in a number of ways, including the exemplar case of one battalion in Sierra Leone that made it their duty to ensure that the breasts of local women in outlying villages were removed from view and covered up.

This exploratory research has demonstrated a number of weaknesses in the response to continued sexual exploitation. The research report culminates with a number of recommendations including:

- The need for more research into the cultural dimensions of PSOs;
- The ongoing and increasing development of in-mission gender awareness training;
- A more transparent and robust response by the leadership to allegations of sexual abuse by peacekeeping personnel;
- The education of key, senior personnel in issues arising from sexual abuse;
- The establishment of a multi-agency group to oversee policy and practice;
- A sharpening of the various Codes of Conduct in order that ambiguities and tensions between the notions of 'prostitution' and 'bona fide relationship' be removed;
- An appraisal of the work of committees attempting to curtail these exploitative activities;
- The need for effective action on mainstreaming gender in PSOs;
- The need for more women represented in PSOs, particularly in the military and police components, as well as at the strategic and decision-making levels;
- Overall action on recommendations made by the UN, including those by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations itself in 'Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective' (2000).

While there have been considerable advances in raising awareness of the vulnerable position of women and children, including the groundbreaking UN Resolution 1325, this tends not to have been followed-up by decisive action. The report is suggestive of the continued force of a military-masculine culture embedded into delicate diplomatic issues linked to resource provision and the dispositions of troop contributing countries. Analysis presented here turns on the long-term socio-economic and political security of post-conflict societies together with the appropriate response to all members of the population, including women and children who have suffered most during and after the conflict, and have the biggest stake in the peace.

CHAPTER 1

PEACEKEEPING AND GENDER RELATIONS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Introduction

The issue of gendered relations in Peace Support Operations (PSOs) has moved steadily up the agenda in recent years, with the topic of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) attracting attention from a number of commentators.¹ Given the nature of humanitarian work within post-conflict settings, allegations of SEA against members of vulnerable groups by relatively powerful individuals including humanitarian and peacekeeper personnel represents a particular concern. Moreover, these provocative and highly damaging activities detracts from the more positive influence PSOs may have 'on the ground' as well as at the higher level of political intervention,² and represents a partial focus of the work carried out by them. The fact that humanitarian aid workers and UN peacekeepers may be the perpetrators of sexual abuses was demonstrated in the February 2002 United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) and Save the Children Fund UK (SCFUK) report detailing SEA and Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Sierra Leone. The issue has been around for some time: UNHCR guidelines were drawn up as far back as 1995³ and have attempted to prevent, for example, refugee women and girls being approached for sexual favours in exchange for goods during distribution. This is again reiterated in the 2001 Lessons Learned document from an Inter-Agency meeting in Geneva in which the then-High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Mary Robinson, supported the Code of Conduct for humanitarian workers in the foreword to the manual. She indicated that "persons in need should not have to fear those who are mandated to protect and assist them."⁴ The following was noted in another section of the document in regards to the establishment of the Code of Conduct:

Experience shows that there is need for a Code of Conduct. Cases in which humanitarian workers have failed to treat refugees with the respect and dignity to which they are entitled have been reported. Allegations of asylum fraud and the involvement of UN peacekeepers in SGBV-related crimes have also been made. Clearly, one of the biggest challenges facing the UN today is preventing behaviours, through self-policing, that bring any of its member agencies into disrepute.⁵

This chapter will highlight the current environment surrounding SEA in the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), deployed in the country since 1999. For background purposes, it is important to note that as a result of the conflict, women and children comprise almost 75% of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the country and have been disproportionately targeted in the war. Despite specific training on gender issues and the creation of a specific Code of Conduct for MONUC personnel, SEA continues to be committed by UN personnel. The establishment of an Office for Gender Affairs (OGA) in MONUC has been trying to deal with some of these issues, but challenges remain. This chapter hopes to constructively contribute towards these efforts by providing both research evidence into the complexities of gendered relations in this particular PSO and recommendations about how best to respond to them.

Study methodology

This study originally set out to examine issues around gendered relations and gender sensitivity training within MONUC.⁶ The inductive research method was designed to capture participant's emerging concerns around gender issues and training. The method considered to be most appropriate incorporated a data-led approach, involving qualitative, semi-structured individual and group interviews conducted with male/female peacekeepers and UN civilians in two sector-areas of MONUC. The study also involved periods of informal observation in these areas in order to understand better the wider context of the issues raised by participants. While findings from this small-scale exploratory study should not be treated as representative, nevertheless they do parallel situations found in other PSOs as reflected in the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Lesson Learned and numerous other papers.⁷ Full details of the sample profile and the fieldwork component can be found at the end of this chapter.

Research focus

The research themes were formulated provisionally with the intention of generating findings around gender issues and training. As the research developed, it became clear that it was important to also provide a wider context to them. Themes to be explored were as follows:

- Context and background to the study;
- The culture and attitude of UN personnel towards the host population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC);

- Peacekeeper perspectives (Military Observers, both men and women) towards a common understanding of gender issues;
- A consideration of the effectiveness of gender sensitivity training;
- Perceptions of MONUC as seen by members of civil society;
- Gendered relations involving commercial sex;
- The Code of Conduct; and
- The overall lack of women in PSOs.

Context

The context for this research is the nature of gendered relations between MONUC peacekeeping personnel and local⁸ civilian women within the DRC. While it is not possible to provide an in-depth background to the current political situation in the DRC, it is important to sketch the main factors fuelling the DRC's instability and conflict against which gender relations have developed in the recent history of the country. The following factors constitute the operational conditions of MONUC:

- the illegitimate exploitation of natural resources by foreign forces and armed groups;
- the creation of a National Unity Government that continues to make slow progress;⁹
- the dislocation of the country into regional 'fiefdoms';
- ethnic/group fracture lines in the conflict;
- the lack of a substantial international commitment to the DRC.¹⁰

Like many of its African neighbours, statistical data on the DRC's socio-economic condition makes for depressing reading. For example, the annual income per head of population is US\$100 per annum and the life expectancy for men is 47 years and for women is 51 years.¹¹ The DRC is ranked 155 from 191 countries in the Human Development Index.¹²

UN Personnel and Peacekeeper Culture in MONUC: A Snapshot

UN peacekeeping personnel occupy a potential range of subject positions¹³ in their unique role. They could, for example, see themselves as humanitarian workers, as members of a particular national military, or as expatriates. These perceptions of self-identity depend on the physical environment in

which they find themselves (recreation/work) or the specific job they are asked to do (reconstruction, patrolling, distributing supplies). What is clear is that their attitudes towards peacekeeping work, and the countries in which they are deployed, are complex, varied and likely to change over time. The criteria for including comments found in this chapter reflect their frequent appearance throughout the course of the research. However, participant views elicited during the fieldwork cannot be taken as representative of the range of attitudes within MONUC amongst peacekeepers. This is due to the limited time available for fieldwork and the relatively small number of contacts – both formal and informal – with peacekeepers and other civilian UN personnel. That said, the sorts of attitudes expressed by a number of respondents go some way to explain their activities in respect of gendered relations, particularly when they are considered through what is described here as the ‘expatriate’ lens.

UN Personnel as ‘Expatriates’

There was a general sense that morale within the MONUC amongst both UN personnel and peacekeepers was less than buoyant with regard to the mission’s long-term aims and objectives, particularly in light of the recent conflict in the Ituri region to the east. It was not possible to compare and contrast these sentiments with those that predominate in other PSOs, although fieldwork similar in design carried out in UNAMSIL (Sierra Leone) during May 2003 appeared to point to higher levels of belief in the efforts of this latter mission. Moreover, the scale of the challenge in the DRC, with its volatile political complexity, geographical enormity and insecure history militated against any expression of what might be described as ‘real hope’ from participants for the DRC’s future prospects.

It was not unusual for participants to express fatalistic views about the future of the DRC, illustrated by reference to the ‘dysfunctional’ country, epitomised by its crumbling infrastructure and apparent lack of direction. Participants saw a large component of these problems, and their possible resolution, as lying with the Congolese citizens. For example, comments that the local men were ‘lazy’ were heard on a number of occasions and summed up the feeling that until the populace mobilised themselves with a view to the long-term (or were organised to do so), the country would not progress, despite the best efforts of the international community. Unsurprisingly, given the depressing context of the DRC in respect of the above, UN personnel and peacekeepers rationalised their presence instrumentally, by frequent reference to the remunera-

tion they could generate in the form of Mission Subsistence Allowance (MSA) and salary. This was best summed up by a UN civil engineer who stated that there were '138 reasons for being here everyday' (referring to the \$138 MSA paid daily to personnel of a particular status within MONUC). A related topic of conversation concerned the potential to generate income in any potential post-war peacekeeping mission in Iraq. The money that could be earned in mission, no doubt justifiably given the potentially onerous nature of the region's working and living conditions (3 peacekeepers had recently been killed, two of whom were said to have been cannibalised), was a key preoccupation of many MONUC personnel.

One corollary of the pessimistic view of the DRC's prospects was that a number of peacekeepers believe that their actions could not make the situation any worse in an already dire situation. In attempting to understand their activities towards gendered relations in particular, thinking should include this potentially weakened sense of responsibility – generated by expressions of fatalism – towards the host country and its people.

Sense of Responsibility towards the Host Population

This research focus developed in response to the continuing reports of sexual activities between male civilian/military peacekeepers and local women and girls.¹⁴ Many of these have been framed in terms of 'scandal' and 'violation' and undermine the expectations of peacekeepers as a positive rather than negative influence on vulnerable, and perhaps previously exploited women and girls in the DRC. In attempting to understand the deeper underpinnings of behaviour of this nature towards local women (acknowledged by many participants and the author of this chapter to be ongoing in MONUC), it was suggested that a number of study participants acted in ways that they were unlikely to replicate in their home countries.¹⁵ Reasons for this may have included their deployment into isolated Sectors or Team Sites (away from the HQ in Kinshasa and the perception of accountability this might bring) and the ever-present threat of boredom. It was also clear that perceptions of the environment in which a number of peacekeepers found themselves was mediated through the expatriate lens such that they experienced an elevated sense of self-perception in relation to the local population. While there are undoubted overlaps with other examples of the national/foreigner dynamic in respect of the existence of a commercial sex industry in particular, more generally the power assumed by a number of research participants was a matter for concern.

Peacekeeper Perspectives towards Gender

Peacekeeper's initial comments regarding the term 'gender' included what they understood to be unbalanced gender roles in the division of labour between local civilian men and women in the DRC. They frequently mentioned the industriousness of local women in collecting water, firewood and rearing children, in stark contrast to local men who, as has already been suggested above, were perceived to be feckless in their approach to family life. Paradoxically perhaps, the local women's disproportionate participation in raising the family may have helped to contribute towards their already vulnerable status in society and the disrespect shown towards them by a number of peacekeepers. In these cases, Congolese women were seen as 'different' from, (for example), white, educated women from developed countries who may be active in drawing attention to the issue of gender equality.

The extremely small proportion of female peacekeepers in PSOs more generally, and MONUC in particular, is an ongoing cause for concern; their numbers are nowhere near reaching 'critical mass'.¹⁶ This lack of gender mainstreaming limits operational effectiveness, and their presence in very small numbers could at times make visible questionable gendered relations between male and female peacekeepers. For example, in the one situation where it was possible to interview female peacekeepers, there was anecdotal evidence that gendered relations between the male and female peacekeepers in this particular group may have been problematic. This was illustrated when a minor confrontation developed between two female peacekeepers and a more senior male peacekeeper. His view turned on seeing these commissioned officers as 'women first' and 'officers second'. To these ends, he implicitly suggested that their subordinate status was linked to their gender and that, following from this, men could exercise certain sexual rights over them, particularly when they had to share the same accommodation.

Thus, not only do questions around operational effectiveness remain *vis-à-vis* the local population in respect of the poor progress made on gender mainstreaming, but in addition, the ability for mixed teams to function cohesively is also an issue that needs to be tackled by DPKO.

In respect of relations between a number of male peacekeepers and local women, a recurring theme concerned the latter group's 'proactive approach' to eliciting sexual contact in exchange for money. Research participants

(including female civilian UN personnel interviewed individually) discussed the importance of the income generated by sexual contact with male peacekeepers for the families of these women. These local women were involved in what might be described as 'survival prostitution' – evident from their desperation – and consequently were vulnerable to high levels of exploitation.¹⁷

One military observer acknowledged that his peacekeeper colleagues paid for sex with local women. In clarifying this further, he suggested that the Code of Conduct, which calls for the prohibition of sexual abuse and/or exploitation by all members of the civilian and military components of the mission, was 'idealistic' if its intention was to stop these sorts of activities altogether. Rather, he understood that if commercial sex was going to occur (he was unable to envisage an alternative scenario when pushed on the question), then at least peacekeepers should demonstrate a greater respect for the women forced into this highly exploitative position; he didn't, however, suggest how this could be achieved. Further, he considered that a number of his colleagues were not 'easily able to wait for their vacations' before seeking an outlet of this kind.¹⁸

Perceptions of MONUC – Members of Congolese Civil Society

Given the focus of this chapter, it was important to attempt to capture the diversity of peacekeeper activities in respect of gendered relations and to elicit both potentially positive and negative views of the impact of MONUC more generally on local people. These issues were raised with local females and one male members of a focus group originating from Congolese civil society.

A consensus emerged that the presence of MONUC was absolutely essential as a precursor to the peace process in the form of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue and establishment of the Transitional Government. MONUC supports the activities of other organisations and is thus actively involved in ongoing strategies to: reunite families, reunify politically divided factions, create employment for local people and facilitate greater freedom of expression for the media. MONUC had also stimulated the presence of NGO's in the DRC. These local organisations had successfully drawn attention to the different challenges in the DRC, ranging from the continued plundering of raw resources to the issue of peacekeeper interaction with local women and girls in respect of prostitution. The OGA was also seen by these organisations as a positive development, particularly its activities on capacity building with local

groups and civil society. However, while a strategy for mainstreaming gender in MONUC is an essential component of the OGA's work, little was known about this strategy amongst civil society networks. They were, however, aware of its role as a point of contact. Resources permitting, there may be scope for the OGA to increase its profile with civil society in respect of its work to gender mainstream within MONUC.

More negatively, however, MONUC was seen by a number of participants as something of an 'occupying force' who had at their disposal disproportionate access to resources. The image of UN personnel driving around in expensive four-wheel drive vehicles juxtaposed with local people in a condition of poverty was mentioned by many informants.¹⁹ Members of this group also went on to argue that a significant number of peacekeepers exerted a negative impact on the society through their routine use of prostitutes, especially with girls under the age of 18.

Comments from Civil Society – Some Background

Though asked about general perceptions of MONUC at the beginning of the group interview, members of civil society were quick to mention the issue of commercial sex.²⁰

They pointed out that the Congolese authorities had a role to play in intervention into this activity and, a further dimension to the issue, the age of consent (and right to get married) which currently stands at 14 years of age. In addition, there was a general feeling from the group that the sexual harassment of relatively poor locally based employees – unlikely to jeopardise their job by complaining about such treatment – went largely unreported.²¹

The main impetus for becoming involved in commercial sex for younger girls, according to one member of a local church organisation, was linked to procuring money for school. Also, hospitalisation for reasons of either illness or pregnancy²² – both demanding financial resources – motivated women and girls to seek money from peacekeepers through sexual contact. Activities that brought local women into contact with UN personnel or peacekeepers of this nature were not, however, without cost. For example, members of the civil society suggested that the pregnancies of daughters brought shame to families through the revelation that they were involved in prostitution. The profound impact of rape on many families is difficult to calculate, but is likely to be under-reported as acts such as this remain taboo in this and many other soci-

eties. The absolute brutality applied in the acts of rape in the DRC is likely to involve severe long-term physical and psychological damage.²³ Frequently, girls are evicted from the family home by their fathers and are forced to find alternative accommodation, adding to the already parlous state of many families in the DRC. Prior to the arrival of MONUC it was said that more women could be seen on the streets of the capital, but this had changed because they now felt intimidated by the presence of male peacekeepers. It is difficult to substantiate such a claim and the reasons behind it, though perceptions of these negative changes are important in themselves.

'Peacekeepers as Powerful'

In broadening the group interview discussion from the subject of commercial sex and gendered relations, the description of 'peacekeepers as powerful' became a theme that appeared to resonate with many local participants. Reference was made to their relative wealth²⁴ and what some civil society participants perceived as the arrogant attitude of some peacekeepers towards the local Congolese people. They went on to state that local people had a nickname for the peacekeepers – 'Vodacom' – the name of the communication/phone company based in the DRC. Their advertising slogan was *toujours plus fort*, or loosely translated 'always stronger'. It was argued that local people made jokes at the expense of male peacekeepers with reference to their attitude towards local women and that they were, perhaps unjustifiably for the majority of peacekeepers, believed to look down on the local population.

Finally, civil society members suggested that the expectations of local people had been raised by MONUC. While operating at a broad political level in an attempt to bring peace to the region, UN personnel were said to remain detached and superior – both physically and symbolically, from many ordinary members of Congolese society. In accounting for this distance, participants drew attention to what they saw as a weak public information strategy leading to a poor image that meant that local people were not always clear about the UN mandate in operation. In addition, they felt somewhat helpless and contended that their aspirations for changes in the behaviour of peacekeepers were not being met. For example, though a meeting had been held in recent months with senior members of MONUC and representatives of the Congolese civil society, MONUC personnel, according to these civil society participants, had largely denied the wide-scale existence of peacekeeper involvement with prostitutes.

Gender Sensitivity Training

The Office for Gender Affairs (OGA) was created in March 2002, and at the time of the current research was staffed by 5 personnel (4 UN personnel and 1 locally employed civilian). In line with UN Resolution 1325, the OGA was established with the aim of ‘incorporating a gender perspective into MONUC peacekeeping operations’. This involves work oriented at increasing women’s participation in political life and the Inter-Congolese Dialogue through attempts to mainstream gender.²⁵ In this context, women are seen as active agents in peace and reconstruction efforts and the OGA works at raising awareness of their input amongst the civil society with the DRC and MONUC personnel.

Amongst its numerous tasks, the OGA also conducts training sessions on gender issues to UN military observers and civilian police and civilian experts up to two or three times a week. The OGA was initially allocated a 3 hour training slot during the 8 day induction programme, however that has now fallen to 40 minutes. Gender sensitivity training sessions are also organised outside of the routine induction timetable, often with little notice. For example a session was delivered to newly arrived Bangladeshi police by one member of the OGA in Kisangani who, though having only limited preparation time, delivered a session that was extremely well received by both the students and their Commanding Officer. Headway is being made, nevertheless, as to date many have benefited from the OGA’s in-mission training and local partners assist with the monitoring of activities. The training covers a number of issues including detailed explanations of the concept of ‘gender’ and ‘gender roles’. The particular vulnerabilities of women and girls in a post-conflict society were also discussed, together with the responsibilities of peacekeepers in respect of the MONUC Code of Conduct.

Responses to Training

Use of the word ‘gender’ in interview and less formal conversation with male military personnel evoked a diversity of responses from participants. These ranged from particular understandings of how the word was being used (frequently at odds with the intended meanings of those whose first language was English), through to a mix of wariness, verging on suspicion for other participants. For some, the word represented an emotionally loaded term closely allied, perhaps, to the terms ‘feminist’ or ‘feminism’. Use of the word evoked a defensive stance from a number of participants and they appeared to feel that they were subject to an investigation during the research interview. In turn, this

led to the interviewer attempting to develop a more subtle engagement with participants by allowing the proceedings to be led by the interviewee to identify what they understood by the term 'gender'. Reactions to the term gender between personnel from different national militaries also spoke to the importance of cultural diversity in understanding, though it is important to stress the impressionistic nature of the data. For example, during fieldwork in one particular sector, an informal discussion that occurred prior to a meeting with the Sector Commander (involving 3 male peacekeepers) was experienced as strained and awkward for all parties involved. This incident illustrated the ways in which the term was open to cross-cultural interpretation, ranging from perceptions of irrelevance, through at the opposite end of the scale, to its significance to gender relations within the UN and wider civil society.

One civilian participant believed that gender training should be more closely allied to the HIV/AIDS lectures delivered on the induction course, and added that a number of the military observers doing the course 'went out of their way' to avoid this more 'intimate' aspect of induction. Quite literally, mention of gender appeared to unsettle a number of male UN personnel. It is clear that a significant number of participants experienced discussions of gender as disconcerting and that scope exists for further research designed to explore the factors underpinning the culturally nuanced responses sketched above. This would assist in the fine-tuning of current strategies and minimise the 'talking past one another' that might occur within the context of gender awareness training.

Peacekeeper participants tended to forget the gender element of induction training, but instead recalled those sessions deemed more important, for example, personal and team safety including: patrolling conventions, radio-communication protocols, vehicle maintenance, care and familiarisation of equipment such as electricity generators and medical issues. Two peacekeepers did recall that a woman delivered the 40 minute programme, though struggled to recall the content. Pre-mission training varied according to the peacekeeper's nationality. For example, one male peacekeeper interviewed had received 3 weeks training designed specifically for military observers. He suggested that 'training cannot change people but at least they might [get exposed] to something different.'²⁶ Two military observers stated that they found the gender sensitivity session of only limited value. However, they added that whilst it didn't appear to make a big impact at the time, nevertheless it allowed them to take part in discussions at a later date involving some of the sensitive issues covered in the session. Finally, while it is impossible to qualify the longer-term effect of gender training, nevertheless the pos-

sibility that raised awareness of gender amongst peacekeepers may lead to its application when faced with particular situations involving women or girls: memory might be jogged when presented with scenarios first seen in the classroom. In addition, the value of gender sensitivity training cannot be downplayed as certain key individuals may become enthusiastic advocates of its aims and objectives and in turn, influence the understandings and attitudes of their peer group.²⁷ Change from the 'bottom-up' can complement attempts at high-level structural change, for example those informed by top-down policy initiatives. Support for gender issues at the strategic level and a top-down approach is essential to successfully mainstream gender, thus the importance of gender-sensitive leadership is key to its implementation.

The Peacekeeping Economy and Commercial Sex

The broader context to the existence of commercial sex within PSOs is what has been termed the 'peacekeeping economy' (PE). Its functioning is described in the following way:

The large influx of well-paid international peacekeeping staff – military and non military – inevitably has an economic, social and cultural impact on the local population, including women. Young women are likely to become involved in and affected by what are known as “peacekeeping economies”, industries and services such as bars and hotels that spring up with the arrival of large, foreign, comparatively well-paid peacekeeping personnel. Many women find work in support positions for the mission, as secretaries and language assistants.²⁸

Thus, PEs support a diversity of gendered relations within PSOs, ranging from the involvement of local women and girls in the commercial sex industry, through, in a less exploitative sense, to the employment of civilians in UN allied local industries and directly by the UN itself. In this way, PEs may exert an *uneven* impact on the host country and create both positive and negative outcomes for the local population. It is perhaps unfortunate for the UN that the more evocative aspects of gendered relations – such as those involving SEA – have dominated in recent years with the less exploitative economic opportunities provided for local people being of little or no interest to the media and other commentators.

PEs development in helping to create commercial sex industries is broadly in line with the situation noted in other PSOs.²⁹ As Madeline Rees has observed:

[T]he presence of 30,000 peacekeepers in Bosnia where war had left a devastated infrastructure, massive unemployment and a barely functioning economy provided both organised crime and entrepreneurial individuals as an ideal opportunity to enter the free market economy.³⁰

Moreover, it is the longer-term impact of PSO that needs to be considered. For example, in situations where there has been a sustained presence of military establishments (for ‘rest and recreation’³¹ and PSOs – such as Cambodia (UNAMIC and, subsequently, UNTAC) – there has, in the wake of the UN presence, emerged a multi-million dollar sex industry. The legacy of PSOs, a point that is frequently overlooked, can contribute towards the economic institutionalisation of potentially exploitative gendered relations in former mission areas in the shape of prime ‘sex tourist’ destinations relying on the extensive involvement of minors. It is important to look to the future of post-conflict nations, not least the nature and sustainability of their economies and the security and vulnerabilities of the host populations within them.

The Complexities of Commercial Sex

It was clear that to talk of prostitution (a subject that frequently emerged after a period of discussion with peacekeepers) as a homogeneous activity was to misrepresent its complexity, although the practice, by its very definition, is exploitative in nature. Given the sensitivities around the selling of sex and sexual services, and the ways in which such activities might be rationalised, accepted or condemned by different participants, this section touches on some of the meanings they attached to the blanket term prostitution. It is rare, but nonetheless important to get at some of the insights of the clients (in this case the peacekeepers) if gender awareness policies are to be made more effective.³²

Commercial Sex

The effectiveness of any policy designed to tackle the issue of peacekeeper’s exchange of money, goods or services for sex is at least partly contingent on an understanding of how perpetrators justify their actions. Most importantly, and this point is worth reiterating, the context of gender relations in MONUC (and other PSOs) is that of a post-conflict setting where more extreme inequalities between men and women experienced during the conflict³³ are likely to persist well beyond it.

Though a number of UN civilian participants suggested that occasionally the relationships between peacekeepers and local women could have a genuine 'romantic' dimension, the stark inequalities between the parties, and the almost non-existent opportunities for income generation for the women (and local men) should make us sceptical of such claims. That is not, however, to disregard the possibility that emotional feelings might develop. However, they could be born of false hope that the longer-term prospects of the 'relationship' with a peacekeeper may lead them out of their current conditions of poverty. When we consider the reality of life for many women in this (post)-conflict setting, it is difficult to imagine that they are able to exercise any real 'choice' about the ways in which their bodies can become units of sexual exchange. In this way it is crucial to gain a sense of their personal and collective histories:

Women are victims of unbelievably horrific atrocities and injustices in conflict situations; this is indisputable. As refugees, internally displaced persons, combatants, heads of households and community leaders...women often experience violence, forced pregnancy, abduction, and sexual slavery...[they can be] deliberately infected with HIV/AIDS or carrying a child conceived in rape...the long term effects of conflict and militarization create a culture of violence that renders women especially vulnerable after war.³⁴

It is more likely the case that the considerably weaker party (the woman) has necessarily to exchange sex for good or services in an instrumental way, further exacerbating her vulnerability as she becomes increasingly reliant on this form of income.³⁵ This is due in part to the cultural context of the DRC with regard to sexual issues; here discussions of sex may be experienced as uncomfortable, inappropriate and cause embarrassment in the more traditional setting of the village, for example. Alternative opportunities to earn a living may become limited as she becomes labelled and stigmatised from mainstream activities in ways that mirror the taboo on prostitution in other contexts. In sum:

Women are physically and economically forced or left with little choice but to become sex workers or to exchange sex for food, shelter or safe passage or other needs; their bodies become part of a barter system, a form of exchange that buys the necessities of life.³⁶

That said, however, there was some evidence for instances of commercial sex that might not easily fit into the category of 'survival prostitution'. Importantly, it was within the terms of gendered interactions of this kind that peacekeepers might describe their relationships as *bona fide*, and therefore, within the terms

of the Code of Conduct. In these situations, local women were constructed as 'girlfriends' and peacekeepers as 'boyfriends' giving the illusion of a more conventional and equitable partnership. While relationships of this kind are unlikely between parties with such starkly contrasting life opportunities, a useful distinction in understanding peacekeeper rationalisation for the exchange of money, goods or services for sex with local women turned on the difference between 'subsistence' and 'consumerist' prostitution. In the first, subsistence, the exchange between the parties was quite literally about survival for the local woman – for example, sex in exchange for food vital for themselves and their family members and for essential materials (such as needed for shelter). In these situations, the woman or girl (and occasionally man or boy) is at her most vulnerable and most exploited. She may have been raped by members of the militia (perhaps Rwandan or Ugandans in the case of the DRC), be displaced from home and family (if they are still alive) and quite literally be living on the fringes of an already precarious society. In the second (as witnessed in one sector area), sexual liaisons with peacekeepers appeared to generate income for local women that went beyond survival and it was said, were used to procure cell phones, to improve personal appearance (hairstyle, beauty products) and so on.³⁷ It was suggested that in this case the local women may have relatively more control over the choice of client with whom she did 'business'. This more 'entrepreneurial' form of prostitution could manifest itself in peacekeeper co-habitation with local woman, or perhaps in a relationship of kinds that was more complex than that characteristic of survival prostitution. During the course of research, these range of circumstances of commercial sex appeared to be at play in the two case study areas and provided peacekeepers with scenarios that may be tolerated by the Codes of Conduct currently in place, a theme that is taken up below. However, while reference was made to the possibility that peacekeepers might be 'co-habiting' with local women, it was claimed that this scenario applied more to UN civilian personnel, who perhaps, are resident in the country for a longer period. Importantly, peacekeepers should not be involved in activities that jeopardise their impartiality. Living with or indeed, sexual involvement with members of the local population (originating from particular ethnic groups, tribes or factions), is a clear infringement of the principle of impartiality and is likely to further fuel tensions.

Codes of Conduct

All personnel working for the UN are subject to a series of rules and regulations. These include: the UN Charter, Staff Rules and Regulations and Ten Rules (Code of Conduct for Blue Helmets). In response to the recent scandals

involving UN personnel (most obviously the UNHCR/SCFUK report on exploitation of refugees in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia) there has been an increased use of the phrase ‘zero tolerance’ in respect to violation of women and girls by UN personnel.

Code of Conduct of the Blue Helmets – a Summary

The Blue Helmet code of conduct is a generic set of guidelines for UN peacekeepers. It stresses the importance of the “highest standards of integrity and conduct...[as well as] ...helping the country to recover from the trauma of conflict.”³⁸ This calls for “special constraint in the public and private lives of peacekeepers.”³⁹ There follows a summary of the code:

Peacekeepers will always strive to:

- Conduct [themselves] in a professional and disciplined manner, at all times;
- Respect the environment of the host country;
- Respect local customs and practices through awareness and respect for the culture, religion traditions and gender issues;
- Treat the inhabitants of the host country with respect, courtesy and consideration;
- Support and encourage proper conduct among our fellow peacekeepers;

Peacekeepers will never:

- Bring discredit upon the United Nations, or [their] nations through improper personal conduct, failure to perform [their] duties or abuses of [their] positions as peacekeepers;
- Commit any act that could result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to members of the local population, especially women and children;
- Become involved in sexual liaisons that could affect [their] impartiality, or the well-being of others.

The Blue Helmets code is intended to encourage positive behaviour so that peacekeepers might be seen as good ambassadors for the UN. It does not specify details of sanctions if the code is broken, though it is known that troop contributing countries are responsible for taking disciplinary action and therefore have considerable autonomy to respond in the ways they consider most appropriate.

Mission-Specific Code: The MONUC Code of Conduct⁴⁰

The MONUC Code of Conduct explicitly deals with issues of ‘prohibition of sexual abuse and/or exploitation by all members of the Civilian⁴¹ and Military components of MONUC’, and has been tailored to the particular cultural context of the DRC. In summary it is framed in terms of guidance, sensitivities, respect and obligations that extend to the private lives of UN personnel. Most importantly, it “strictly prohibits...any act of sexual abuse and/or exploitation of members of the local community, including children.”⁴² This action constitutes “an act of serious misconduct.”⁴³ In the code, sexual exploitation/abuse is defined as:

- Any exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliation, degrading or exploitative behaviour. The public solicitation of any such act shall be considered as an aggravating circumstance;
- Any sexual activity with a person under the age of 18. The mistaken belief in the age of the person cannot be considered as a defence. This provision shall not apply to national laws and/or customs;
- Any other sexual misconduct that has a detrimental effect on the image, credibility, impartiality or integrity of the United Nations.

The MONUC Code of Conduct then states that the “presence of MONUC personnel in bars, night-clubs where the services of prostitutes are available is prohibited.”⁴⁴ The sanctions for violating these rules include: “summary dismissal and repatriation if applicable.”⁴⁵

By the end of the fieldwork in the DRC (18 April 2003), the MONUC Code of Conduct was still awaiting translation into French from English in what is a predominantly French speaking mission and almost exclusively French speaking local population. Further, the Code of Conduct – the relevance of which

impacted directly on the local population – had not been distributed more widely than UN personnel.

Reactions to questions about what was contained in the Code of Conduct addressed to civilian and military personnel elicited a muted response in the majority of cases. Most were aware of its existence, and were able to cite the ‘under 18 rule’. This tended to be the only detail that they had retained from the code, though few identified with its intention of significantly curtailing the use of prostitutes by UN personnel. Both male and female participants considered that its aims were ‘unrealistic’ and that prostitution was ‘unavoidable’. One male peacekeeper pointed out that because the age of consent was 14 years in the DRC, the Code of Conduct was ‘going against local culture’. It was clear that whilst the Code of Conduct was a serious document with important goals, nonetheless, it tended not to constitute a set of guidelines uppermost in the minds of personnel informing their day-to-day practice. Rather, despite the serious intention of the Code, it remained, as one male peacekeeper participant stated, ‘another thing to put in your pocket’.

The MONUC Code of Conduct – Some Thoughts

One peacekeeper considered that the Code was ‘unenforceable’. Part of the reason for this, ironically, was that the sanctions were not implemented when there were breaches of the Code. One reason for a lack of decisive action he thought, was the suggestion that particular senior military personnel ‘who should lead by example’ were also flaunting the code. The participant went on to state that if UN personnel (though he referred to peacekeepers specifically) are found to be carrying local women in their vehicles for example, (a strictly forbidden practice), they should be repatriated, though this termination of duty rarely, if ever, happened. He said that it would not necessarily stop such practices, but that ‘they [the peacekeepers] would be more discreet’.

A humanitarian worker suggested that sanctions for breaking the Code should involve a reduction in MSA. She argued that there was insufficient ‘control’ of these activities and that ‘everyone knows that [wide-scale prostitution] with girls and women existed’. She was concerned that there had not been any improvement and that ways to fight it would have to be developed. She suggested that it would be the negative aspects of MONUC that would be remembered, rather than the positive, when the mission eventually left. In particular, she highlighted allegations around the growing presence of babies born of now-absent peacekeepers.

Exploring Motivation in Gendered Relations

The military has long been associated with camp followers that have drawn on the labour of both men and women. They have provided a vital support role across a range of activities, including women's role in prostitution. Though some military's do enforce a 'no-sex' rule during deployment, for example, they are largely complicit in their condoning of such activities and see them as a legitimate outlet for their troops and would rather 'manage' the problem rather than it happen outside their control. However, in recent years, increased concern around the threat of HIV/AIDS has urged military policy makers to act.⁴⁶

It is almost certainly the case that the promise of travel and living and working in a country other than their own formed part of peacekeeper's motivation to become involved in PSOs. Indeed, a number of participants made reference to the 'adventurous' aspects of their tour of duty in the post-conflict setting, together with the importance of playing a humanitarian role in a stimulating multinational context. In addition, it is possible that to travel and 'see the world' were factors in peacekeeper's original enlistment into their respective national militaries (in the case of all-volunteer forces), and that involvement in PSOs offered continuity with individuals interested in travel and perhaps – for some – learning about cultures other than their own. However, it has been argued that the opportunity to 'see the world', an important slogan for military recruiters, also refers implicitly to aspects of travel and adventure that involve the promise of 'carefree' sex with exotic women in far flung destinations where the norms guiding such relations are loosened considerably.⁴⁷

Evidence from the current study does support the proposition that involvement in gendered relations of this nature is of interest to a number of peacekeepers. The pattern of behaviour of these peacekeepers, their attitudes, justifications and SEA of younger girls has much in common with the activities of the so-called 'sex-tourist'. Importantly, these men operate in conditions of sharp inequality and relative impunity, and therefore conduct themselves in ways they would never do within their home countries. One commentator argues:

[S]ex tourism offers the key to a deeper understanding of the nature of 'interdependence' in a global economy between profoundly unequal partners. It might have been thought that where the rich meet the poor face to face, where flesh and blood establish some of the most intimate relationships human beings are capable of, this

might open the eyes of some of the participants. That this rarely happens shows the power of ideologies of dominance and superiority, not in theory, but as they work themselves out in the world.⁴⁸

UN personnel, aside from being involved in vital humanitarian work are also human beings, and as such, subject to what Seabrook describes as “the power of ideologies and dominance.”⁴⁹ However, as has been argued throughout this monograph, there is a need to continue to ensure that gendered relations in PSOs remain central to the thinking of policy makers and personnel in their everyday lives.

Conclusions

This chapter offers a snapshot of a particular aspect of gendered relations in the DRC. It is not representative and should not be treated as such. By focusing on the negative aspects of gendered relations between peacekeepers and local women and girls, the chapter necessarily omits detailed information on the more positive aspects of the mission, together with detailed analyses of those peacekeepers who do not use the services of prostitutes. In other words, it is important to reiterate the caveats that the research findings are partial and are intended to address the research themes outlined earlier. In so doing they may give the impression that the activities of many mission personnel revolve around the activities outlined above; clearly these are only part of a bigger picture.

However, it is clear that a significant proportion of the women and girls within the post-conflict setting of the DRC are extremely vulnerable and that there needs to be greater concern for their overall well-being by MONUC. Women who trade sex for money, goods or services should not be blamed for their predicament, nor should the culture of the DRC be used to excuse the activities of a number of peacekeepers and other UN personnel. Contributing countries should not just be aware of gender issues, but need to be *actively* involved in improving the conditions of women and children more broadly. To this end there exists countless number of policy documents, including UN Resolution 1325 as the most high profile, that are intended to protect the rights of women and children in order that their circumstances might be improved.

The lack of real progress on gender mainstreaming continues to limit the effectiveness of strategies intended to fulfil the aims outlined in policy and

must take higher priority if the gender elements of the mission are to evolve. In a related sense, the military-masculine culture of PSOs represents a further hurdle to respond to gender issues appropriately, not least in terms of the complex nexus linking the investigation of allegations of SEA, investigation procedures, the UN's sensitive relationship with troop contributing countries and perceptions that a number of peacekeepers appear to act with impunity. There is an urgent need for more policy around confidentiality of those who seek redress for violation in order to protect them from being ostracised from their communities, as well as for the implementation of support systems for those who may have experienced this form of exploitation. It is hoped that this monograph is received in the spirit in which the research has been conducted: that of constructive criticism that might contribute to curtailing the activities of a minority of male peacekeepers whose activities in respect of gender relations remain exploitative.

Recommendations

The recommendations for action that follow from this monograph reflect the situation on the ground in the DRC. A number of them reinforce recommendations that have already been made by UN DPKO, though have yet to be fully followed through and implemented.⁵⁰

- Further, larger scale research is needed into the gender dimensions of PSO's. One focus might be to highlight any national-cultural differences in the extent to which personnel understand the how they might proactively promote the rights of women and children.⁵¹
- In-mission gender training needs to be developed in scale and breadth and should incorporate stakeholders from civil society, as well as rely on a mix of both women and *men* in its delivery (this has been achieved in MONUC and has had successful results). This should build on and develop contributing countries pre-deployment training that needs to contain a focus on the culture, history and traditions of the host country. This content could be standardised, compiled in MONUC and disseminated to troop contributing countries.⁵²
- The MONUC Code of Conduct, while uncompromising in tone needs to be sharpened up in terms of the ways it is translated into effective policy. Mechanisms for accountability need to be developed that are transparent and do actually bring an end to inappropriate behaviour through

punishment. The whole process of reporting, investigating and if appropriate, naming/shaming needs to be revised, not least to send the right messages to civil society as well as UN personnel.⁵³

- The responsibility for monitoring inappropriate behaviour should rest at the highest levels of the chain of command where ultimate accountability lies.⁵⁴
- Senior personnel need to be familiarised with the complexities and sensitivities of SEA.⁵⁵
- Key members of a multi-agency steering group should be established to oversee policy and practice in respect of gender issues.⁵⁶
- Independent assessments of the state of gender relations in this and other PSOs need to be carried out at regular periods to ensure policy and practice are functioning appropriately. Their remit would include examining gender mainstreaming strategies as well as considering the impact of mission on the local population.
- A well-publicised procedure for complaints needs to be established that can guarantee the confidentiality of the complainant and is accessible for those in HQ, Sector and Team Site areas. It should be available to the wider population as well as those employed within the UN.
- Long periods of peacekeeper inactivity should be managed through strong leadership and involve innovation and enthusiasm.⁵⁷

Further Details of Sample and Fieldwork

A total of 24 interviews were conducted including 3 focus groups. In all, 21 male peacekeepers and 2 female peacekeepers were involved from a wide spread of national militaries. Contingent personnel were not involved. 16 civilian personnel were also involved. 17 interviews were tape recorded with the remaining being recorded through extensive note-taking. Periods of observation were based in and around the leisure areas (including bars and hotels) in two sectors. The fieldwork was 16 days in duration. Confidentiality and data protection has been managed in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Social Research Association.

Notes

1. A selection of this evidence includes: E Rehn & E J Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building*, UNIFEM, 2002; C Enloe, *Manoeuvres*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000; C Cockburn & D Zarkov, (eds), *The Postwar Moment*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 2002; J Stuart, *The Dark Side of Peacekeeping*, *The Independent*, 10 July 2003, <www.digitalcongo.net>, (4 March 2002).
2. The aim of this monograph is not to allocate blame, but rather to highlight shortcomings in the area of gender relations that continues to damage the reputation of the UN as well as limit the effectiveness of PSOs. The broader political questions linked to the structure of the UN together with the resources it is able to command, (ultimately these factors constitute the background against which SEA are committed) is outside of the remit of this monograph. For background information on these complexities see: L Polman, *We Did Nothing*, Penguin Books, London, 2003; T Weiss, D Forsythe and R Coate, *The United Nations and Changing World Politics*, Westview Press, Boulder Colorado, 2001; and M Goulding, *Peacemonger*, John Murray, London, 2002.
3. *Sexual Violence Against Refugees: Guidelines on Prevention and Response*, UNHCR, Geneva, 1995.
4. *Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Refugee Situations*, Inter-Agency Lessons Learned Conference Proceedings, Geneva, 2001.
5. Ibid.
6. This focus fulfils the UN's wish to see more research in this area. Its basic tenets are informed by: the significance of power differentials between peacekeepers and the local population; women's vulnerability to exploitation; the gender beliefs of peacekeepers; the culture of military-masculinity; how best to handle allegations and sanctions; and the overall lack of systematic and enforceable disciplinary measures in response to SEA committed by UN personnel.
7. For example, see *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations*, Lessons Learned Unit, DPKO, United Nations, New York, July 2000.
8. The term 'local' is used to refer to the proximity of the women to MONUC establishments, not to their place of origin, as a significant number are likely to be displaced persons as a consequence of the conflict in the east of the DRC.
9. See MONUC Newswire, 22 October 03, where it is stated that: "An international committee overseeing the two-year transitional process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has chided the national unity government for a wide range of delays which...risked jeopardising the holding of nationwide elections within the next 24 months."

10. J Ginifer, Peacebuilding in the Congo: Mission Impossible?, *International Peacekeeping*, 9(3), 2002, p 122.
11. Ibid, p 121.
12. See <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2002/en/indicator/indicator.cfm?File=cty_f_COD.html>, (24 November 2003).
13. The term 'subject positions' refers to the multiple identities through which people see themselves at different times and in different places.
14. Note that while the majority of SEA is committed against women and girls, we do not discount the reported cases of SEA committed against boys.
15. J Seabrook, *Travels in the Skin Trade* 2nd ed, Pluto Press, London, 2000. In this book the author details the ways in which, when away from home and family, individuals may engage in 'out of character' patterns of behaviour, including those involving sexual activities. While abroad, there exists greater potential to develop other 'identities' that facilitate such behaviour as that reported in this monograph. These understandings do have some resonance with the situation of peacekeepers, both structurally (their circumstances) and at the level of the individual (motivation, expectation and so on).
16. Typically put at anywhere between 20 and 30 percent. See the United Nations document, *Mainstreaming Gender an Overview*, United Nations, New York, 2002. Currently, women make up only 4 per cent of total military and police in DPKO missions. See Statement of Mr Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Open Meeting of the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security, 29 October 2003.
17. However, male misperceptions and misunderstanding of the gender/power dynamic was demonstrated by one military observer who suggested that 'by having sex with prostitutes, they [the UN clients] are helping them by giving them money so that they can feed the family.'
18. Decreasing the periods between vacations has also been suggested as playing a role in helping to limit the extent of peacekeepers involvement in commercial sex.
19. The UN 4WD vehicle has become something of a symbol of the disparity in wealth between the UN and the host population, as Linda Polman has argued, UN personnel have become closely identified by the host populations "as people who drive around in big cars..." From an interview with L Polman, *The Guardian*, 09 May 03.
20. As Stehn et al, have stated "In Kisangani and Goma...members of local communities told us that peacekeepers were buying sex from young girls and that condoms were visibly scattered in the field near UN compounds. A local woman told us that girls 'just lie down in the field for the men in full view of people as they

are not allowed into the camps'. In Kinshasa, according to an official we spoke to, women line up at the hour most UN workers go home, hoping a male worker will choose them." Op cit, p 12.

21. They also commented on the significant growth in prostitution since the arrival of MONUC.
22. A number of peacekeepers had, she argued, been responsible for many pregnancies.
23. R Lefort, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 11–18 September 2003.
24. Military observers experience extremes of relative wealth (they receive over 500 times the average annual Congolese income in MSA, this is not including their annual salary which many suggested remained 'untouched' during their time in mission. That they were employed by the UN, an organisation able to command fundamental resources in terms of food, water, shelter, transport and communication, immediately lifted them above the majority of the host population.
25. Gender mainstreaming strategies "[R]equire that the implications for women and men of actions, policies and programmes be carefully considered" from *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective*, op cit. More specifically, the success of gender mainstreaming is argued to rely on: "[T]he commitment of senior management and the establishment of effective accountability mechanisms...guidelines and other materials are of little use if there is no explicit policy commitment to gender equality and to the gender mainstreaming strategy." Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, *Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview*, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York, 2002, p 27.
26. In addition, he thought that gender sensitivity training should point out to peacekeepers that 'just because they are surrounded by women, [when in bars and clubs], it does not mean they are 'handsome' but rather that they occupy a position of financial power in relation to local women.'
27. One participant referred to a male peacekeeper who had 'taken up the gender issue' with some enthusiasm and had begun to convey its importance, perhaps with a significant degree of credibility because of his position as a group 'insider', to other male peacekeepers.
28. Stehn et al, op cit, p 62.
29. In addition, "A military presence has a massively disproportionate impact on the local economy, and in particular on the economic opportunities open to poor women". See Jones, *Command and control: the economies of militarised prostitution*, *Peace News* 2442, pp 1–4.
30. M Rees, *Market, Migration and Forced Prostitution*, *Humanitarian Practice Newsletter* 14, June 1999.

31. See K Moon, *Sex Among Allies*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997, on the particular case of South Korea; numerous other examples exist.
32. If progress is to be made on the gender related issues discussed in this monograph, there needs to be greater dialogue between those who occupy 'for' and 'against' positions in respect of the legitimacy of commercial sex in PSOs. The current unsatisfactory conditions relate in-part to the dogmatic positions held by commentators on both sides of this complex argument and the lack of understanding of the complexity of the issue. See the work of J O'Connell Davidson and J Sanchez Taylor on clients (both men and women) described as 'sex tourists', in a series of research papers funded by ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking), 1996, and Seabrook, op cit.
33. Stehn et al, op cit, p 1.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid, p 11.
36. Stehn et al again suggest in the case of rape for example: 'In my culture, it is not common to talk about sex with men, let alone strange men...many of the women who were raped like I was can identify their attackers, but find it difficult to report them to the police. Ibid, p 69.
37. Mark Hunt has commented on the inappropriate application of the term prostitution to non-marital sexual relations in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly where gifts form the central element of exchange. Within the context of 'sugar daddies' for example, he states: 'In the urban spaces of the township...fashion is highly valued and young women invoke discourses of "rights" to justify their freedom of movement, thus facilitating relations with men that include sugar daddies...typically it is gifts of cash, or consumption goods such as cellphones that sustain these [relations].' See M Hunt, *The Materiality of Everyday Sex*, *African Studies* 61, pp 99–120.
38. See the UN's *Ten Rules: Code of Personal Conduct for Blue Helmets*, <www.un.org> (24 April 2003).
39. Ibid.
40. These are taken from the Interoffice Memorandum from Amos Namanga Ngongi (SRSG MONUC) dated 16 December 2002, and were addressed to All members of the civilian and military components of MONUC. Its aim was to "provide guidance of the particular conditions and sensitivities in MONUC's area of operations."
41. This includes MONUC police.
42. Ngongi, op cit.
43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. See L Heinecken, Facing a merciless enemy: HIV/AIDS and the South African armed forces, *Armed Forces and Society* 29(2), 2003, pp 281–300.
47. See A Bickford, *See the World, Meet Interesting People, Have Sex: Tourism, Sex, and Recruitment in the US Military*, <<http://www.nsrc.sfsu.edu>> (24 November 2003). See also J Hockey, *Squaddies, portrait of a subculture*, Exeter University Press, Exeter, 1986, p 36.
48. Seabrook, op cit, p xvi.
49. This analogy, while provocative, may provide a useful explanatory framework with which to make sense of SEA involving peacekeepers. This monograph has only been able to touch on these and work is ongoing to explore the issue.
50. Numerous PSOs have failed in their obligation to satisfactorily implement policy initiatives linked to gender analysis and gender perspectives laid down in, for example, Resolution 1325. Questions remain in this respect around current operations in Afghanistan, and the early stages of a possible PSO in Iraq. The following statement could be considered to have wide applicability to a range of PSOs: “None of [the] thinking, activism and advocacy by women worldwide, and the proclamations, resolutions and ratifications with the UN and member governments responded to it, visibly influenced the Bosnian peace process.” See Cockburn et al, op cit, p 57.
51. Though current awareness training foregrounds gender, it is also important to consider other factors – particularly given the diverse range of troop contributing countries – shaping the nature of relations developing in PSO’s. Francis Cleaver states: “[T]here is a need to consider class, race and age when understanding men’s and women’s lives, and the ways they relate to each other.” See F Cleaver (ed), *Masculinities Matter*, Zed Books, London, 2002, p 7. Some languages do not have the word ‘gender’ in their vocabulary, and it would be reasonable that interpretation of the concept is likely to vary between cultures. Also see *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective*, op cit, p 18: “Briefings on the culture, history, and traditions of the host country should include gender issues and emphasize responsibility towards and respect for women of the host country.”
52. See *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective*, ibid, p 18.
53. Ibid, pp 19–20.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. See Ibid, concerning the establishment of an external monitoring group. A possible mode for good practice – if indeed it is considered to be such – might be the

UNAMSIL Personnel Conduct Committee in Sierra Leone (UPCC) that draws on 16 stakeholders to oversee cases of SEA perpetrated by UNAMSIL personnel. However, one possible weakness of this committee might be its reactive rather than proactive response to incidents.

57. The UN suggests, for example, to find ways to discourage promiscuity among peacekeepers, such as the provision of training which emphasizes the shame of exploiting trafficked and economically desperate women, having more recreational activities for peacekeepers, providing telephone links to home and increasing the number of female peacekeepers (Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective, op cit, p 10. The current research did not address itself to the issue of activities for peacekeepers in MONUC.

CHAPTER 2

PEACEKEEPING AND GENDER RELATIONS IN SIERRA LEONE

Although gender equality is an internationally recognized basic element of human rights, activities in the area are criticized for interfering with the culture of the host population, imposing western values and practices, and in extreme cases, of undermining social norms. The very subject matter – gender – is often misunderstood as women-only, which guarantees confusion regarding what is meant by the term, resistance, and in some cases outright hostility.¹

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the United Nations Peace Support Operation (PSO) in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). This PSO has been held by many to be successful, particularly when the relative stability of Sierra Leone is considered against the background of the particularly violent conflict affecting this country between 1991 and 1999.² Though the region continues to be unstable (the conflict in neighbouring Liberia has only just been brought to a close), the recent elections in Sierra Leone in conjunction with the dominance of the UN peacekeeping presence has undoubtedly created conditions of relative security.³

However, efforts by both UNAMSIL and humanitarian organisations in Sierra Leone have attracted heightened attention since February 2002 when the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) and Save the Children Fund UK (SCFUK) report detailing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Gender Based Violence (GBV) was unofficially released.⁴ Unlike other missions, where scandals tend to have been dismissed by reference to the ‘anecdotal’ nature of reports, the wide dissemination of the UNHCR/SCFUK findings,⁵ while criticised by some, evoked international interest. Documented cases of SEA and other atrocities committed against refugees by those in power, including “teachers, individuals in the commercial sectors, refugee leaders...individuals with access to goods or money, humanitarian aid workers from various UN and International Agencies, NGO’s and UNAMSIL Peacekeeping troops”,⁶ invoked dismay mixed with disbelief from

concerned onlookers. These abuses, though shocking to many, were nevertheless 're-discovered' in that the issue of SEA within PSOs have been around for at least the last decade, and have led to the establishment of guidelines to curtail such abuses of power.⁷ The intention of this chapter is to highlight the current environment surrounding SEA in UNAMSIL deployed in the country since 1999.⁸ The focus is on the culture of prevention and reaction to SEA in the wake of the UNHCR/SCFUK Report. Specifically, it is concerned with issues turning on the positive effects of the report (tighter policies and raised awareness), together with those understood to be more negative (SEA potentially moving underground).

The current chapter will reflect on perceived differences between UNAMSIL⁹ and MONUC¹⁰, where a dedicated Office of Gender Affairs (OGA)¹¹ was established that has a direct reporting responsibility to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). Its focus will also be on the importance of cultural differences in peacekeeping practice and the ways in which they may be imposed upon female members of the local population

While there is no discrete OGA in UNAMSIL, there is a Gender Specialist in the Human Rights section of this PSO.¹² Her work has included supporting a Women's Task Force of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and has recommended the development of a policy of psychological support for victims of violence. Further, the chapter will convey research findings focused on gendered relations derived from fieldwork conducted in and around UNAMSIL during two weeks in May 2003 as a way in which to tentatively reflect on the potential implications of the absence of a dedicated OGA in UNAMSIL.

The objective of this chapter is to constructively contribute towards meeting the aims of Resolution 1325, the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations, that direct attention to issues related to gender perspectives in PSOs. This research hopes to illuminate the particular issues at play in UNAMSIL in respect of gendered relations, together with recommendations about how best to respond to them.

Study methodology

The more immediate background to the current chapter is related research carried out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in and around the UN PSO (MONUC) one month prior, during April 2003.¹³ The findings from

the DRC (that had originally explored gender awareness training) have helped to shape the findings presented here involving a focus on SEA in UNAMSIL. While it was important to generate data on the potential use of gender awareness training in UNAMSIL, the particular circumstances and recent history of Sierra Leone and UNAMSIL in respect of the UNHCR/SCFUK report meant that potential cases of SEA were foregrounded in the research design.

The method considered to be most appropriate to address this broad area incorporated a data-led approach, involving qualitative, semi-structured individual and group interviews with male peacekeepers (no female peacekeepers were available)¹⁴ in three sector areas of UNAMSIL. In addition, UN and NGO civilians were interviewed where possible. The study also involved periods of informal observation, and more casual interaction with a small number of sex-workers in the bars and clubs frequented by UN and other personnel in Freetown.¹⁵ Findings from this study should not be taken as representative of the situation of gendered relations in this or other PSOs. However, themes upon which the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Lessons Learned report focused,¹⁶ (and numerous other reports) parallel particular aspects of gendered relations observed in UNAMSIL.

Research Focus¹⁷

This research builds on and develops work carried out in the DRC (MONUC). Its broad focus includes a consideration of the ways in which gender issues are tackled in UNAMSIL within the context of the absence of a dedicated OGA. Themes explored below include:

- Context and background to the study;
- Sierra Leone and the legacy of, and response to, the UNHCR/SCFUK report;
- The UNAMSIL Personal Conduct Committee (UPCC);
- Commercial Sex Work in Sierra Leone;
- Gendered Relations and Peacekeeper National Culture.

Context

Sierra Leone has a history of trafficking and sexual exploitation of women.¹⁸ A feature of the violent war in the country has been the high incidence of rape, gang rape, and sexual slavery, and is argued to have included between

215,000 and 257,000 women and girls.¹⁹ Reports of SEA in refugee camps is likely to represent one aspect of a much wider instances of GBV, some of which has been perpetrated by humanitarian workers and peacekeepers.²⁰ The context for this research is the nature of gendered relations between UNAMSIL peacekeeping personnel and local²¹ civilian women within Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone and the UNHCR/SCFUK Report

It was clear from the outset that the political conditions of UNAMSIL in respect of gender issues were considerably different from those found in the DRC and MONUC. In these terms there existed a heightened sensitivity of the 'gender issue'. This was clear from the generally greater awareness evident amongst participants of the Code of Conduct, for example. In addition, the language used around gender appeared to reflect a greater recognition of the nature of 'appropriate' gender relations, though it is important that analysis engages with potential tensions between *articulated* levels of awareness and *actual* activities on the ground.²² This is not to suggest that the activities of peacekeepers and others is *consciously* deceptive, but rather, that the evolution of awareness may continue to be at odds with the activities of a number of personnel who may have 'learned the appropriate language'. Indeed, one civilian participant remained adamant that the exchange of sex for money, goods or services with girls under 18 was 'definitely' ongoing, although involved a minority of peacekeeper perpetrators. However, unlike the situation in one particular sector area of the DRC (MONUC), these activities were argued to have gone 'underground' and become 'secretive'. The participant also considered other unintended outcomes of the UNHCR/SCFUK report that had created unease amongst some NGO donors who were less willing to fund organisations they perceived as vulnerable to potential scandal around cases of SEA. Finally, this participant suggested that the report had 'reinforced a silence' around these issues and that 'nothing had really changed' with regard to the exploitation of women and girls by more powerful stakeholders. More in-depth research is necessary to further substantiate the suggestion that cases of SEA continue to be perpetrated by male peacekeeping personnel.

UNHCR/SCFUK Report – Response

A number of initiatives have resulted from the report. At the highest level within Sierra Leone has been the establishment of the Coordination

Committee for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CCSEA), an interagency committee under the leadership of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The focus here has been on the methods and prevention procedures that have led to the creation of the Standards of Accountability aimed at humanitarian organisations. The CCSEA continues to develop strategies to tackle abuse including raising awareness and drafting policy on personnel recruitment and service provision for survivors. However, it has – as yet – failed to create a post for a Community Relations Officer (CRO) who would interface with local people and receive their grievances.²³

The UNAMSIL Personnel Conduct Committee (UPCC)

The UPCC has its genesis in complaints by three women to UNAMSIL in April 2000 that ‘uniformed peacekeepers were going around the houses in the Aberdeen area offering US\$1 notes to under-aged individuals in exchange for sexual favours.’ UNAMSIL responded to these allegations and reinforced its commitment to prevent SEA and GBV by creating the UPCC in March 2002. The role of the UPCC is to promote awareness of the UN Code of Conduct for Peacekeepers and ‘zero tolerance’ on SEA and GBV. It extends to national and international staff, both civilian and military. Its aim is to respond to all reported allegations of misconduct and ensure that ‘appropriate action is taken.’ The committee comprises 16 members spanning the range of international, national and civilian and military stakeholders. Its terms of reference include:

- A mass awareness programme targeting civilians and military personnel on the Code of Conduct;
- Receiving of external allegations on misconduct and impropriety committed by members of the Mission. (Telephone hotlines for use by the general public have been made available) as well as encouraging them to complain in writing;
- The development of preventive and dissuasive strategies to all components of the Mission;
- Making recommendations to improve existing rules and regulations relating to personal conduct;
- Making recommendations to the appropriate authorities on all allegations of misconduct.

The UPCC represents a robust and inclusive attempt to curtail SEA and GBV by UNAMSIL personnel. It formed the focus and content of a good many of the interviews, particularly from those participants directly involved in the committee. However unlike OGAs, its remit does not include the inclusion of mission policies and activities that have a gender perspective, nor interface with civil society organisations, to encourage equal participation of women and men in peace processes to ensure coherence between mission policies and national priorities. In these terms, it tends to be a reactive, rather than proactive in its aims and objectives.

The UPCC – Some Issues

Concern was raised by one UN civilian participant that the military Provost Marshall investigates allegations of military personnel, thereby keeping the allegation ‘in-house’. While the Civilian Police (Civpol) focused on allegations made against civilians, the participant felt that one way to build confidence with the local community was to have an external and transparent body tasked with *independently* investigating both military and civilian personnel. Only in this way could a credible level of accountability be created in the minds of the local population, some of whom may have viewed the internal workings of UNAMSIL with suspicion.²⁴

During the period in which the fieldwork took place, the UPCC was encouraging the higher level decision-makers to draw up a list of habitual offenders as one way to prevent them perpetrating similar offences in different missions.²⁵ It was suggested by another UN civilian participant that to date (around the middle of May 2003 at time of interview), the telephone hotlines had remained unused. This, it was felt, could be due to a number of reasons, including access to telephones, unreliability of landlines in Sierra Leone, and the lack of confidence of survivors or their friends/relatives to speak with members of an organisation that could appear intimidating to disenfranchised groups. In addition, it might be that survivors are unaware that their rights had actually been violated. In the case of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees who may not be familiar with the environment, whose first language may not be English, and who may be experiencing estrangement from family, daily chaos around securing accommodation and other basic resources, the idea that they might calmly locate and dial a number to complain of an abusive incident about an unknown peacekeeper is far from practical. Sentiments around the value of telephone hotlines were supported by another UN civilian participant who aired similar concerns.

Overall, it was argued that while the policies and initiatives of the UPCC were seen as positive and progressive, ultimately, it was the issue of *response* on which the Committee would be judged. Was it able to deliver on its promises, and could it gain the respect of the local population? The lack of service provision in Sierra Leone, particularly in respect of survivor and support mechanisms, it was argued, were key stumbling blocks to its ultimate success or failure. In addition, there was a perception that the level information sharing remained limited between the various stakeholders and that, ultimately, enforcing a 'zero tolerance' policy for upwards of 18,000 peacekeepers was 'unrealistic'.

Commercial Sex Work

First impressions of the social organisation of commercial sex-work in Sierra Leone differed from the situation in the DRC. However, these observations are unlikely to be representative as it was only possible to visit three sectors, with the duration of the stay in these areas limited. A number of civilian participants, including members of civil society, referred to the ways in which certain peacekeepers 'donated' cell-phones to women, established them in rented accommodation in Freetown, and visited them during weekends or other off-duty periods. These relationships were exploitative in that they were characterised by sharp differentials of power between privileged male peacekeepers and local women. Another member of civil society, a male worker for an NGO in one of the sectors, described how significant numbers of women were perceived to form 'relationships' with members of one particular battalion. The participant described a pattern of gift exchange between the peacekeepers and the females, though failed to identify the local women's highly disadvantaged and insecure position in relation to the secure male peacekeeper. He went on to describe how during troop rotation, the women would accompany their partners to the airport to 'wave them off'. It was argued that they would then start the next 'relationship cycle' with members of the incoming replacement battalion. It is likely that local women in these situations – having few other possibilities to generate an income – had necessarily to become involved in these exploitative relationships.²⁶

It appeared that the centre of the commercial sex-industry in Sierra Leone was Freetown. Here, it was widely known that 'survival' and 'consumerist' prostitution²⁷ co-existed. Hotels, bars, brothels and clubs catered for the range of clients from local men through to UN personnel who tended to be financially better-off and were the natural 'targets' for prostitutes seeking money.

Undoubtedly, this particular prostitute economy was of importance to local business people, a number of whom may have supported and facilitated such activities.

Within a few kilometres of UNHQ in Mammy Yoko were a number of clubs in which, as a white male, it was extremely easy to meet with sex-workers. They included women from Liberia, Guinea and other countries. These refugees tended to be less secure and were subject to racist comments from women who originated from Sierra Leone, as they were perceived to be 'stealing their business'. In addition, their self-identities were not those of 'prostitutes' or 'sex-workers', but rather as 'refugees', and they saw their work as involving a series of short-term relationships with 'boyfriends' that just happened to provide some financial gain. The extent to which they were forced into this work, and exploited due to their insecure position, was rationalised through this identity, though their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation remained.

An interview was held with the representative of an NGO who worked with prostitutes, some of who were under 18 years of age. This participant argued that the information provided by these sex-workers was that the 'majority' of their clients were UNAMSIL personnel, although again, this information cannot be substantiated and should be treated as anecdotal. However, it may have been that UNAMSIL personnel who used the services of prostitutes who were either 16 or 17 years of age did not consider that they were breaking the rules as this age range fell within the age of consent in Sierra Leone.²⁸ In addition, that aspects of prostitution are 'legal' in Sierra Leone offered male peacekeepers a further possibility to defend themselves. The question of age and sexual abuse is however, dealt with in the Code of Conduct,²⁹ and in this respect peacekeepers are in clear breach of the guidelines.

Gendered Relations and Peacekeeper National Culture

The four days spent being hosted by two battalions in different sector areas allowed the unexpected possibility to observe the internal social organisation of these units. In addition, it provided an opportunity to make some provisional comments about their apparent impact on local women.

Both battalions were located in sectors that were relatively isolated and were accessible mainly by helicopter, with the journey by road taking many hours. They were seen as a largely positive influence on the local community by one

participant of the civil society and a UN civilian worker. The former discussed how one of the battalions was especially concerned to distribute food and that they had made their medical services available to local people. They had been involved in the reconstruction of schools and other public buildings. In addition, they had been successful in quelling local unease when it developed, and were quick to appear and 'brings things under control.' They were also active in collecting information and bringing perpetrators of crime (committed locally) to justice, sometimes working with local civilian police.

Discipline in the Battalions

Unlike the battalion mentioned earlier that interacted closely with the local population, the two case study units had a curfew of 18.00 hours – this was strictly adhered to. Visits to the local town or outlying villages were not conducted alone, with vehicles always containing a Senior Non Commissioned Officer (SNCO), and often with three occupants. There was a great sense of 'home' created in the barracks and messes with well-organised recreational facilities, a mosque, sturdy accommodation constructions and an overall sense of pride in their ability to be largely self-sustaining. A range of activities was organised on a daily basis, and included movie nights for the offices (and the availability of a TV for the lower ranks), cricket, football and weight-training. There was a great sense of camaraderie created in the camp that appeared to provide 'outlets' for the boredom that can often arise during deployments abroad, particularly amongst troops confined to barracks. Informal participants, and others interviewed more formally (including a UN civilian worker), suggested that they had no real reason to leave the barracks, and when they did they were faced with a language barrier. The use of alcohol was strictly prohibited on religious grounds thereby removing another justification for wishing to leave the familiar surroundings of the camp. The officers were permitted up to 2 months leave in total, after six months in mission.³⁰

It was stressed that the lower ranks could 'get into trouble' just by talking with local people, and they were kept under surveillance for much of the time. However, some limited interaction was noted between gate guards and local children and women, with clothes, food and other resources being distributed. Officer participants – interviewed informally – also made reference to their perceptions of peacekeeping troops from other countries who 'lacked discipline' were 'more likely to get involved' (with local women). On numerous occasions the phrase 'best performance' was used and the esprit-de-corps

of the two battalions frequently turned on rivalry with other national forces with frequent reference to their own 'professionalism' versus that of the 'amateurism' of other units.

Informal officer participants also said that lower ranks received monthly briefings on the Code of Conduct, and that it was conveyed to them, (in religious overtones) that any potential involvement with local women was considered as 'both a sin and a crime'.

Gender Issues – Cultural 'Grooming'

The effects of PSO's on the local communities that host them are likely to vary widely. One way in which to understand the dynamics influencing their operations is to consider the intersection of local cultural norms with those imported by peacekeepers. In this thinking, PSOs can be seen as an integral element of a 'cultural framework'³¹ that turns on peacekeepers constituting a particular cultural presence. If an operation is to be effective, it is crucial that it maintains good relations with the local population. This is most likely to occur if peacekeepers have a sound understanding and respect for the local culture.³²

During a brief period of fieldwork in one sector site, it became apparent that cultural norms between local and imported peacekeeper cultural practices were a point of tension. Shortly after one of the battalions had been deployed in Sierra Leone, concern had been expressed by senior members of the battalion at the 'nakedness' of local women (referring to their uncovered breasts). An informal officer participant had described how he was shocked at this inappropriate display and that groups of officers had been tasked to drive around villages asking that local women 'be covered up'. Discussions were also held at higher levels with Paramount Chiefs who were asked to co-operate in this process and pass the message on to the women and adolescent girls in villages to 'dress properly'. A number of women replied that they did not have available the clothing with which to cover up. Members of the battalion then set about distributing clothing so that the women could adhere to the wishes of the peacekeepers.³³

An essential component of the pre-deployment or in-mission training of peacekeepers involves their understanding and respect for local cultural practices. Yet, this research suggests the existence of a somewhat 'colonial' attitude towards local people and their cultural norms. In the case of the predominantly Muslim members of the battalion – it was thought that local

people were best served by adhering to imposed religious practice concerning the perceived 'offensiveness' of displays of certain parts of the female anatomy.

Members of the two battalions I spent time with displayed a qualitatively different response to local people in Sierra Leone than appeared to be the case for other battalions. For example, those from neighbouring African countries did not impose cultural practices, derived from religious belief systems, on the local population. These peacekeepers, however, were more likely to have sexual relations with local women as the differences between them were not considered to be a barrier to interaction or subsequent integration; these 'outlets' were normalised and considered 'natural'. Further explanatory factors may be that either there was no prohibition of, or disciplinary enforcement to prevent, sexual activities with local populations; or there was little effort placed in the African battalions to keep the troops occupied through a dedicated programme of sport and leisure activities. As Tamara Duffey states, drawing on Rubinstein's work on the cultural dimension of peacekeeping:

A peacekeeping mission may mean many different things to different people, because each may have a different political understanding of the situation. Peacekeeping operations take place in the context of the daily lives of multiple communities: diplomatic, military [humanitarian] and local. Each of these communities embodies culturally constituted ways of behaving and understanding the objectives and practices of the operation. Sometimes the intersection of these cultural spheres is problematic.³⁴

From this exploratory research, it was clear that there existed an intersection of military-masculine and cultural practice that influence the nature and frequency of contact with local women. The importance of committed leadership was of prime importance, as was the use of military discipline to shape the patterns of gendered relations developing during deployment.

HIV/AIDS Training

Discussion around gender relations with informal officer participants in the battalions was usually met with the official response that mixing of peacekeepers and women was a prohibited activity. In these terms, members of the officer corps were extremely prescriptive in setting the boundaries of discipline in terms of what would and would not be tolerated. However, despite such strict disci-

iplinary measures, the UN undertook to provide HIV/AIDS training. The contradictions between the prohibition of sexual activity with local women on the one hand, and the provision of HIV/AIDS training on the other is clear. However, it was not possible to elicit data on this point of tension, although there was a sense in which it was 'assumed' that peacekeepers would engage in sexual relations. This understanding draws on framing men as 'biologically driven' to engage in heterosexual intercourse, and was most likely considered to be a pragmatic response to this possibility.³⁵ Further, that the Code of Conduct provides for the possibility of so-called *bona fide* relationships, and also that peacekeepers may well engage in sexual activity while on leave outside of the PSO could also be seen as rationales for the provision of this training. No information was forthcoming on either the value of the training or any potential issues around the spread of HIV/AIDS by peacekeepers.³⁶

Awareness of Gender Issues

As has already been suggested, the UNHCR/SCFUK report had created an impact on the gendered culture of UNAMSIL in terms of highlighting recent incidences of SEA. Yet, informal UN civilian participants believed that the report had perhaps helped to move ongoing abuse underground, and that it was less likely to be discussed openly. A focus group held with five military observers in one of the sector areas revealed a high level of awareness of gender issues, and was able to comment on the vulnerabilities of women and children in the post-conflict setting and identified the desperation that might drive some to exchange sex for money, goods or services. They were also aware of the relatively young age at which many local women (and girls) had started families and the increased pressure this placed them under to generate income to feed their families. These heightened levels of awareness were evident from other military observers, though, unlike the DRC and MONUC, the extent to which this level of awareness was gained in-mission or prior to deployment was unclear. The induction phase of the peacekeeper training programme tended to stress the Code of Conduct in view of the UNHCR/SCFUK report, rather than focusing on gender awareness 'training' per se.

However, while awareness appeared to be heightened amongst peacekeepers, a UN civilian participant believed there existed considerable scope for improvement in their behaviour. This participant suggested that 'peacekeepers were not trained to recognise gender issues' and that what was needed was in-depth training to familiarise peacekeepers with 'the history and culture' of Sierra Leone to improve their awareness.

Conclusions

Each PSO develops according to a complex nexus of internal, external and historical factors. It is clear that in UNAMSIL, the UNHCR/SCFUK report had left a deep impression on levels of gender awareness together with strategies (such as the UPCC) intended to monitor and follow-up such activities. Unlike the DRC (MONUC), there did appear to be more of an onus on preventative action, although considerable work remains to move from the current tendency to be reactive. A considerably more proactive approach might head-off the exploitative actions of peacekeepers towards local women, although, again it may also serve to drive activities underground. While the availability of a telephone 'hotline' through which members of the local community might report abuses, or raise issues around these activities, appears to be a useful contribution, nevertheless, it fails to adequately take account of the realities 'on the ground' for individuals who may have been abused, or have knowledge of abuse. For the hotline to be more effective, there would need to be a concerted campaign to raise awareness amongst local people, but also to ensure landline or perhaps cell-phone provision, perhaps through agencies already working with vulnerable groups.

The absence of a dedicated OGA is a real concern, as the current climate appears to turn – as we have already suggested – on *reaction* to allegations,³⁷ rather than a proactive gender awareness-raising approach. Highlighting the importance of the Code of Conduct represents only one narrow aspect of pursuing the goals set out in Resolution 1325, for example. In the opinion of a number of participants, cases of SEA involving minors and peacekeepers were ongoing in UNAMSIL. While policies are in place, as one participant argued: 'The weakness [is] response in terms of investigation procedure, survivor follow up, and legal prosecution response either here, or in the peacekeeper's country of origin.' A further issue of concern is that of monitoring and data collection. One UN civilian participant said: 'This information is not gathered in any systematic manner. Determining the types and variations of SEA around the country that involve peacekeepers, to my knowledge, has never been done, not even by UNAMSIL.'³⁸ Yet difficulties do exist more generally in monitoring and data collection:

The specific impact for those working in gender is that the conditions for life for women in the political, economic, and social realm are difficult to quantify, qualify or apply as a solid basis for arguing the case for improved gender equality.³⁹

Rumours, anecdote and allegation were noted to circulate around 'who the culprits were' in respect of sexual abuse. Here, alleged offenders were normally referred to by their national identity, though it was not possible in this small-scale exploratory and qualitative study to produce statistically representative data. It is also extremely difficult – even if a more quantitative approach to data collection was taken – to produce information on patterns of exploitation in relation to ethnic or national identity. First, the area is extremely sensitive and deeply politicised; inter-military and inter-national rivalry has traditionally turned on one nation being considered 'superior to another' in both a serious and a more light-hearted military 'banter' sense. Banter and talk of this nature is intensified within the context of military based operations where competence and nationality identity are frequently conflated, particularly within the context of multinational operations. Here, it would be vital to use the services of an independent and external body to oversee research in this area. Second, in a more methodological sense, PSOs by their very nature involve a defined number of nationalities, and therefore samples can ever only draw on a narrow range of any potential population. In this way, research drawing on nationality as the key explanatory variable may actually tell us little since those nationalities involved in any one PSO are likely to feature in the data. However, despite these obvious shortcomings, there remains an urgent need to collate disaggregated data on incidences of SEA. One possibility might be to establish a confidential hotline for UN personnel to report potential abuse; investigation would then follow. Finally, a further strategy would be to attempt to harmonize national military disciplinary codes. Currently, a number of participants believed that UN Codes of Conduct were not treated seriously, but that national military codes had a greater immediacy, urgency and relevance to personnel of the particular force in question.

In sum, while this small-scale study appears to reflect heightened levels of gender awareness, nevertheless it was difficult to know the extent to which SEA had become more secretive and 'gone underground' as had been suggested. A particular pattern of 'scandal and response' had developed in Sierra Leone, described in the following way:

As with any scandal, there is a heightened focus and energy on the topic followed by an exhaustion of resources and initiative. This has been noted in Sierra Leone where it is becoming increasingly challenging to ensure agency cooperation and collaboration...this is not a topic that should be left off agendas and out of discussions. The protection of women and children from sexual abuses perpetrated by

those employed to assist them must remain a focus. It is up to those with the power to do so to ensure that power is used for good and not violate those that look to us for protection.⁴⁰

The particular exigencies of the PSO in Sierra Leone, coupled with the continual 'rotation of staff, no doubt combine to undermine the consistent application and committed follow-up of various strategies. The extent to which the policies on SEA and GBV, together with the 'acceptability' and 'grey-areas' surrounding prostitution, serve to muddy the waters in terms of those who make and enforce policies. Given that operations in Sierra Leone have been drawn-down, it may be inappropriate to recommend that a dedicated OGA be established. Yet this exploratory chapter does point to the continued concern, articulated here by a number of participants, that SEA continues in which peacekeepers are implicated.

Recommendations

Given that UNAMSIL is in the process of drawing-down, the following recommendations may seem largely academic. However, as part of the ongoing attempt to enhance the effectiveness of PSOs in respect of gendered relations in post-conflict contexts where women and children are characterised by particular vulnerabilities, the following recommendations should be considered:⁴¹

- Directing attention to the extent to which the Code of Conduct is considered to be 'realistic', particularly with regard to the 'grey area' of prostitution;⁴²
- Give consideration to encouraging a harmonisation of national military's disciplinary code involving SEA and 'appropriate' gender relations as one way to make immediately relevant the rules under which UN military personnel function;⁴³
- An appraisal of the achievements and impact of the UPCC should be carried out and integrated into the gender components of the mission;⁴⁴
- The lack of a proactive and widely credible gender focal point is of continuing concern in UNAMSIL and thought should be given to the establishment of a dedicated OGA, or perhaps widening the remit of the UPCC as an interim measure;

- Any gender specialist is expected to have direct access to the SRSG;⁴⁵
- Issues of accountability, transparency and associated follow-up action (e.g. punishment of peacekeepers), should once again be placed at the centre of policy and awareness raising campaigns. These have slipped down the UNHCR/SCFUK report fades from consciousness;⁴⁶
- The ongoing challenge to be more effective in gender mainstreaming needs to be rigorously pursued, as the lack of female peacekeepers demonstrates;⁴⁷
- UNAMSIL needs to have a widely known, proactive and approachable community relations officer or officers (CROs). They would interface with the local population to ensure that grievances are treated seriously, and feedback delivered to those making complaints;⁴⁸
- Considerably more training needs to be organised and delivered (requiring additional resources), and in particular, more senior personnel need to familiarise themselves with local gender issues and the most appropriate ways in which to respond to them;
- One component of the appraisal of senior leaders should be their success or otherwise in dealing with issues around SEA and GBV involving UN personnel;
- The UPCC, while involving a range of stakeholders, needs to be more inclusive of civil society in respect of women's groups;
- Senior officials should be trained to recognize and be prepared to punish inappropriate behaviour amongst UN personnel in respect of SEA;
- Greater protection of survivors of abuse and support/counselling need to be publicised and offered as part of an overall package of proactive response to potential SEA;
- A record of perpetrators needs to be collated and should be used to determine the opportunities open to these individuals in relation to future employment with the UN. The experience of the UPCC should be shared/known among the main stakeholders and between missions (best practice). This should be linked to the Gender Advisor at HQ (DPKO) to build bridges between peacekeeping missions and share good practices;

- Data needs to be collected around incidences of SEA. A statistical base disaggregated by variables including geographical location, national military and nature of offence would provide an evidence base from which 'hot-spots' could be identified and response (training/awareness) targeted towards those that appear most at risk of exploitation. (See footnotes 33 and 34 above).

Further Details of Sample and Fieldwork

A total of 21 interviews were conducted including two focus groups. This sample was made up of military personnel, UN civilians and NGO staff. 12 interviews were tape-recorded, and members of the contingent were not involved. A significant number of more anecdotal discussions and observations were conducted in and around UNAMSIL and three sector areas. The fieldwork was 14 days in duration and confidentiality and data protection has been managed according to the guidelines laid down by the Social Research Association.

Notes

1. Chief, Office of Gender Affairs, UNMIK, *End of Mission Report*, October 2002, p 2.
2. For a different view see W Reno, *The Failure of Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone*, *Current History* 100, 2001, pp 219–225.
3. While it is drawing down, UNAMSIL currently represents the largest UN PSO.
4. See UNHCR/SCFUK, *Sexual Violence and Exploitation: the Experience of Refugee Children in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone*, Geneva, 2002.
5. This report is widely believed to reflect activities that have occurred in a number of refugee camps and cannot be easily dismissed.
6. See C Galenkamp, *Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Lessons Learned from Sierra Leone*, UN OCHA, 2002.
7. See the 2001 Lesson Learned document from an Inter-Agency meeting in Geneva, in which the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Mary Robinson, supported the Code of Conduct for humanitarian workers in the foreword to the manual. *Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Refugee Situations*, Inter-Agency Lessons Learned Conference Proceedings, 27 – 29 March, 2001.
8. Around 4,000 ECOMOG troops were deployed in 1997 and can be seen as the precursor to the current mission.

9. There is no dedicated OGA in UNAMSIL. The UNAMSIL 'Gender Specialist' is more closely affiliated with the Human Rights Section where she has a number of more widely defined tasks.
10. MONUC is the UN Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
11. OGA's in PSOs draw their mandate from various international legal instruments, such as the UN Charter, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The UN has an obligation to consider the rights and perspectives of both sexes in the development of policy and programmes and UN Resolution 1325. The OGA in MONUC is mandated to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations.
12. A Memorandum of Understanding exists between DPKO and the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the position of the gender focal point in UNAMSIL.
13. See previous report: *Peacekeeping and Gendered Relations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*.
14. The absence of female peacekeepers underlines their overall low numbers within the UN peacekeeping force more generally.
15. Including British military personnel deployed as part of the International Military Assistance Training Teams (IMATT) to train the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF).
16. See *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations*, Lessons Learned Unit, DPKO, United Nations, New York, July 2000.
17. The efficiency of the Protocol office in Mammy Yoko (UNAMSIL HQ) ensured that my stay in Sierra Leone revolved around a closely worked out programme of structured visits. This both facilitated and limited the research. For example, for a period of some days I was hosted by two different national battalions who insisted that I reside in their officer's quarters. While I was free to move around the battalion, language barriers meant that I had only limited contact with members of the contingent and largely 'formal' interaction with the English speaking officer corps. That both areas were geographically isolated also left me unable to pursue the full-range of my research interests as transportation was at a premium. Given the focus of the research, it was difficult to gain insight into the nature of interaction occurring between Military Observers (for example) and the local population, though some tentative impressions of these dynamics were formed.
18. Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs Sierra Leone, *World Congress on Commercial Sex Exploitation of Children*, August 1996.

19. For additional information, see: *We'll Kill You If You Cry, Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict*, Human Rights Watch Report 15(1), January 2003, <www.hrw.org>, (20 October 2003).
20. Documented cases of SEA being committed by humanitarian workers and peacekeepers go as far back as 1995.
21. The term 'local' is used to refer to the proximity of the women to UNAMSIL establishments, not to their place of origin, as a significant number of them are likely to fall into the category of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees.
22. The phrase 'liberal humanist discourse' has been used to highlight tensions between language that reflects agendas such as those around equal opportunities (for example, gender mainstreaming strategies), with views and actions that might run counter to such publicly articulated sentiments. One sociologist as has described the phrase liberal humanist discourse: "allowing the "good" citizen to take on a standpoint that is accepting of diversity but unable to comprehend how he or she could be privileged by race and gender." S D Farough, *The Social Geographies of White Masculinities, Critical Sociology*. The relevance of this statement will become clear when discussion turns to the suggestion that while policies in respect of gender have evolved positively, their 'follow-through' continues to falter in key areas such as gender mainstreaming. A similar sentiment – framed in terms of frustration that 'Lessons are not Learned' – is to be found in *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective*. An extract of the main text and a footnote in this report reads: "Perhaps the single most important lesson learned is that lessons are not learned...again, gender mainstreaming is new enough that one cannot assume that what is planned for or agreed upon always occurs [but] monitoring is required, required, required." Op cit p 25.
23. Recommendations for a CRO have yet to be taken up in the PSO in DR Congo (MONUC) as well. See *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective*, op cit, p 16 for details of this particular recommendation.
24. One UN civilian had referred to the anger of a number of the local community at what they perceived to be the immunity of peacekeepers implicated in abuse. A more senior peacekeeper participant stressed that the repatriation of perpetrators, when it did occur, should not be seen as a 'soft option', but should damage the career of the individual involved.
25. A UN civilian employee noted that the UPCC did not set out to orchestrate 'witch-hunts' into the private lives of UN personnel, thereby alienating the groups with whom it wished to work, but rather to create a constructive and progressive dialogue aimed at incremental change.
26. It is important to understand that the battalion involved in these exchanges were perceived as 'local' to the women involved. That they originated from a geographically proximate country meant that cultural and other differences were not

so great, and relationships were more likely to develop between them. Alternatively, as the chapter argues, was the case of those battalions originating from Asia, who it was said 'had little in common' with members of the host population and were considerably less likely to interact with them.

27. See previous report: *Peacekeeping and Gendered Relations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*.
28. The age of consent in Sierra Leone is 14.
29. The Code of Conduct explicitly states that the legal age of consent is 18.
30. However, if they decided to travel to Europe rather than their country of origin, they were allowed to take six weeks' leave.
31. T Duffey, Cultural Issues in Contemporary Peacekeeping, *Journal of International Peacekeeping*, p 143.
32. Ibid, p 151.
33. Many women villages in proximity to the battalion appeared to be dressed in recycled clothing such as bra's that fitted poorly and may have restricted movement. This possible restriction – of particular importance given the physical tasks they were engaged in – did not concern those instructing them to cover their bodies.
34. Duffey, op cit, p 146.
35. This understanding of men's 'natural sex drive' is widely held. For example, the head of the UNTAC mission in Cambodia was quoted as saying: "It was natural for hot-blooded young soldiers who had endured the rigours of the field to want have a few beers and to chase 'young beautiful beings of the opposite sex'". See S Whitworth, Gender, Race and the Politics of Peacekeeping, in E Moxon-Browne (ed) *A Future for Peacekeeping?*, Macmillan, London, p 180.
36. The girls who have either escaped or been released by the rebels habitually turn to prostitution. Nearly one hundred percent exhibit one or more STIs. In Bo, the YWCA assists former girl captives by providing counselling, one meal a day, and skills training. On arrival the girls are taken to a clinic for a reproductive health check-up and treatments. Of the 99 participants present, all 99 tested positive for STIs; most had multiple infections. For additional information, read J Benjamin, Conflict, Post-Conflict, and HIV/AIDS – The Gender Connections, Women, War and HIV/AIDS: West Africa and the Great Lakes, <www.worldbank.org/html/prmge/womensmonth/benjamin.doc>, (27 October 2003).
37. However, as one UN civilian suggested, these normally concern 'serious allegations such as rape'. This person went on to say that 'transactional sex with a minor is not something that I have ever seen as being taken seriously by the organization as a whole...some at UNAMSIL would argue strongly with that, but,

in my opinion, it has fallen by the wayside, or more accurately, was perhaps never fully picked up as a huge concern.'

38. UNAMSIL parallels UNMIK (Kosovo) in this respect as the following suggests: "No gender situational analysis or related data collection has been conducted [during the first year of the mission] despite the fact there is insufficient reliable gender data or analysis available to provide a solid foundation for decision makers." Chief, Office of Gender Affairs, UNMIK, *op cit*, p 6.
39. *Ibid*.
40. Galenkamp, *op cit*, p 11.
41. A number of these recommendations are mission specific, and therefore novel, while others represent a reiteration of those found in *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective*, *op cit*, pp 15–20.
42. This point turns on the definition of what constitutes a 'bona fide' relationship. Given that there will always be an element of value judgement in labelling a relationship this way, peacekeepers require greater background information on the circumstances that face local women within the post-conflict setting. This point connects to the issue around understanding better the cultural context of the PSO in question.
43. One military observer suggested that the UN Code of Conduct was considered 'too amorphous' and with little 'real bite'. It was argued to exist within the cultural milieu of the UN, an organization considered to turn on the pivot of 'diplomacy'. The UN had a reputation of failing to intervene robustly. The participant considered that national military disciplinary codes might have greater relevance for perpetrators, so long as they were enforced.
44. It has already been suggested that: 'A well publicized procedure for complaints should be put in place that can allow complaints to be made confidentially in the field as well as at Headquarters.' *Gender Mainstreaming*, *op cit*, p 20)
45. *Ibid*, p 16.
46. This point has been in various forms numerously. *Ibid*, p 19.
47. *Ibid*, p 17. Despite declarations that progress has been made on mainstreaming gender in PSOs, women make up 4 per cent of the total police and military personnel in UN peacekeeping operations. See: Statement of Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno. Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Open Meeting on the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security, 29 October 2003. These sorts of statements can create an illusion of moving forward and ignore the realities on the ground.
48. See *Gender Mainstreaming*, *op cit*, p 16.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

The two small-scale exploratory case studies presented here point to the continuation of activities involving peacekeepers and local women and girls that challenge both the letter and the spirit of the UN Code of Conduct and UN Resolution 1325. While it would be inappropriate to generalise these findings more widely, empirical data from other peace support operations (PSOs) points to the continuation of similar activities.

The monograph opened with a brief discussion of the social and economic contexts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone respectively. It was suggested that ongoing incidents of massacres and conflicts in the Ituri region of the DRC marked this environment as being somewhat different from that in Sierra Leone, where there existed a greater degree of security and stability against the background of recent elections. A further contextual difference between the UN missions in the DRC (MONUC) and Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was the atmosphere surrounding reflection on, and practice of, gendered relations. In the case of Sierra Leone, it was clear that gendered relations—in both the ways they were discussed and played-out—differed from activities in UNAMSIL, as the legacy of the UNHCR/SCFUK report had undoubtedly served to raise awareness around sexual exploitation and gendered relations. However, a number of participants suggested that the effect of this new climate had sent sexually exploitative activities ‘underground’ and caused them to become considerably more ‘secretive’. Further, it was suggested that peacekeepers had ‘learned the language’ of equality and diversity in respect of gendered issues (the so-called ‘liberal humanist discourse’), but that there existed a tension between what was understood to be ethically acceptable and what was actually practiced by a number of peacekeepers. In MONUC, the peacekeeper’s use of prostitutes was less covert, and during one phase of fieldwork in a sector site, was in the open as illustrated by the high profile of uniformed members of one battalion’s contingent personnel in leisure sites argued to be places for meeting prostitutes.

While passing reference was made to the so-called ‘peacekeeping economy’, illustrated, for example, in the establishment of bars and brothels, there

remains a paucity of understanding and information related to this dynamic. Thus, strategies intended to tackle instances of sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) committed by peacekeepers should, in a political-economic sense, function at the levels of both supply and demand. One avenue to be explored further through research could be crystallised in the following question: 'What conditions (political/social/cultural/economic) give rise to the flourishing (or otherwise) of bars and brothels? Once established, bars and brothels serve to support and facilitate abuse and in so doing, frequently rely on the tacit tolerance of military establishments. If policies against exploitation and criminality are to be strengthened, including the trafficking of women, tackling the problem will require robust intervention aimed, in-part, at the *laissez faire* entrepreneurialism that ultimately treats women and girls as units of economic exchange.

Peacekeepers appear to the local population to be powerful and privileged, especially to vulnerable groups including women and children. Currently, a number of them may abuse their positions by bartering money, food or services for sex. To tackle such violations, mechanisms must be established to challenge exploitation and abuse when it arises. The absence of any kind of systemic, enforceable instrument to impose accountability serves to skew many aspects of peacekeeper's relations with local people in both PSOs, and is likely to be a common theme in other post-conflict settings. Members of civil society remain particularly concerned at the impunity with which some peacekeepers act towards local women and girls.

In MONUC, there was a dedicated Office of Gender Affairs (OGA) with direct access to the SRSC's office. The OGA is mandated to both mainstream a gender perspective in all decisions taken on policy and programming initiatives as well as work with the Congolese population and society to bring the reality of the conflict, and its gendered dimensions, to the attention of decision-makers and Transitional Government. In UNAMSIL, a gender focal point sits in the Human Rights section, and necessarily has to juggle a range of other responsibilities. Ideally, the terms of reference for this post would be to act as a robust point of support for mainstreaming and other gender awareness strategies. To reiterate a concern that has been made repeatedly, it is vital that any strategy designed to address the range of gendered issues in PSOs has to be well-resourced, staffed with senior personnel and given a high profile at every stage of the mission's activities. It should also work closely with local women's groups in order to comprehend the priorities of the local population. Only then might gender training and gender awareness initiatives be treated with the gravity they deserve. However, until a systemic approach is taken to incorporate gender issues, the

UN will continue to react to allegations, rather than take a proactive gender awareness-raising approach. Other challenges reflect wider issues that can be traced back to the culturally nuanced interpretations of the concept of gender, and the aims and objectives of such awareness strategies. Here, there exists a greater need for research that can highlight patterns of understanding of gender related issues turning on, for example, national (military) cultures/religious beliefs that shape engagement with the term gender.

The pattern of recruitment for PSOs must also significantly change. The gender balance within peacekeeping personnel is currently inadequate: women make up only 4 per cent of the total civilian police personnel in PSOs, and figures are equally low for the military.¹ Victims, usually female, have repeatedly stated that the sight of a man in uniform may trigger memories of a past violation, or suggest that they would refuse to report cases of SEA to any member of the male sex. Under such circumstances, the UN must appeal to troop contributing countries to encourage women's participation in PSOs, and identify challenges towards increased deployment of female personnel in order to enable the UN to adapt strategies to counter-balance such challenges.

The UN Codes of Conduct, while appearing uncompromising in their use of language, do nevertheless, contain 'grey areas' that may be used to challenge the extent to which peacekeepers frame their activities with local women as 'exploitative'. Ultimately, the notion of a *bona fide* relationship will always be characterised by a degree of value judgement. The abuse of minors, however, is an issue of real concern and the lack of transparency around the process of allegation through to punishment remains a hindrance to progress in this area. Here, the UN, while needing to demonstrate clear leadership through punitive action, is in a state of semi-inertia as it has to confront the complex political and diplomatic challenges pervading its relationships with troop-contributing countries. It is too early to get a sense of the effectiveness or otherwise of UNAMSIL strategies (for example the UPCC, including the 'telephone hotline') on the extent to which it has curtailed SEAs. These incremental changes are welcome and are to be encouraged in other PSOs. Such strategies, however, require planning at the earliest stages of the mission, and sustained throughout the entire duration of the mission. However, it is important that independent assessment of such initiatives is made, otherwise a degree of wariness will remain about the extent to which the UN takes such strategies seriously. This can, in part, be addressed through the sensitisation of all decision-makers, particularly at the strategic level, to the importance of gender mainstreaming, the need to host an in-mission capacity to investigate allegations and apply disciplinary measures, if so required. To be successful, con-

tinuous training, reporting and follow-up mechanisms will be required. It is time to pay more than lip service to the 'zero-tolerance' policy, as not only do acts of abuse and exploitation violate human rights, but seriously undermine the credibility of the very mission itself.

The report presented here contributes to a growing empirical evidence base concerning the activities of a minority of peacekeepers towards local women and children. These activities should not distract from the positive aspects of the work of the UN; during the course of the research, I encountered many committed, dedicated and enthusiastic personnel whose interventions contributed towards the reconstruction of societies and populations broken by war. However, given the shifting reputations of organizations including the UN who have recently come under the critical spotlight within the context of the Iraq war and the events leading to its invasion by allied forces, faith and trust in institutions such as this has appeared increasingly fragile.

The activities detailed in the report are symptoms of a deeper malaise turning on power and privilege reflected through the lens of a transcultural militarised masculinity promoting certain forms of aggressive heterosexuality. They are supported by what the social theorist Bob Connell has called 'complicit masculinities'. As he states: "masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy, are complicit in this sense."²

The continued failure of the UN to take decisive action against perpetrators can be interpreted as tacit acceptance that cases of SEA are an inherent component of every PSO. Complicity of this sort is supported and reinforced by the range of military masculine subcultures clustering around a deep and widely voiced belief that men have a biologically driven need for sex that, at best, can barely be held in check by rules, regulations, attempts at behaviour modification (training) and awareness raising. Thus, it is increasingly essential that all peacekeepers are made aware of their roles and responsibilities as a UN representative, as well as their position of perceived authority in society. This position should never be used to bribe, coerce, or pay for sex.

The main focus of this monograph has been on the exploitative nature of gendered relations existing between a minority of peacekeepers and local women and girls in two PSOs. The abusive activities under scrutiny have tended to perpetuate a 'perpetrator/victim' dichotomy that has been valuable in analysing the exploitative dynamic between the two parties. However, while this framework has been used to map activities and develop deeper understanding, it is

important to recognise and acknowledge that women are more than victims, and men in these contexts have the potential to be more than perpetrators.

It is vital that attempts to reformulate the oppressive gender order—apparent in the ongoing instances of exploitation as discussed above—necessarily mobilise the energies and interests of both men and women. Cockburn and Hubic's study of women's organizations in the post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina is indicative of women's wider resilience and agency, even in the face of sustained gender based violence.³ For example, they show how these women were able to co-ordinate activities to create economic independence, a valuable status in freeing them from their dependence on men and the potential corollary: perpetuating an oppressive gender asymmetry. Cockburn and Hubic also highlight the ways in which particular women were able to take important action against violence inflicted upon them during the conflict, and to provide crucial legal advice on issues arising from the terrible conditions created during the war. Finally, they write of the women's increased involvement in the male bastion of politics, together with their significant role in reconciliation work. Overall, this analysis serves to elevate women from their frequent portrayal as victims, a status that may frequently be used to oppress them. Women are not always vulnerable. They are essential components in both war and peace and their positive role should be integrated in all decision-making, policy planning and programming. Women need to be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. While challenging, it remains that much work has already been done to address the issue and once best practices and lessons learned are better integrated throughout all levels of a PSO the very nature of PSOs themselves may change. It is hoped that this modest study may contribute towards this process.

Notes

1. Statement of Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno. Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Open Meeting on the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security, 29 October 2003.
2. R W Connell, *Masculinities*, Cambridge, Polity Press. 1995, p 79.
3. C Cockburn and D Zarkov (eds), Women's organizations in the rebuilding of Bosnia-Herzegovina, *The Postwar Moment. Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*, Lawrence and Wishart. London, 2002, pp 68–84.

CHAPTER 4

CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

The UN Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)

- Further, larger scale research is needed into the gender dimensions of PSO's. One focus might be to highlight any national-cultural differences in the extent to which personnel understand the how they might proactively promote the rights of women and children;
- In-mission gender training needs to be developed in scale and breadth and should incorporate stakeholders from civil society, as well as rely on a mix of both women and *men* in its delivery (this has been achieved in MONUC and has had successful results). This should build on and develop contributing countries pre-deployment training that needs to contain a focus on the culture, history and traditions of the host country. This content could be standardised, compiled in MONUC and disseminated to troop contributing countries;
- The MONUC Code of Conduct, while uncompromising in tone needs to be sharpened up in terms of the ways it is translated into effective policy. Mechanisms for accountability need to be developed that are transparent and do actually bring an end to inappropriate behaviour through punishment. The whole process of reporting, investigating and if appropriate, naming/shaming needs to be revised, not least to send the right messages to civil society as well as UN personnel;
- The responsibility for monitoring inappropriate behaviour should rest at the highest levels of the chain of command where ultimate accountability lies;
- Senior personnel need to be familiarised with the complexities and sensitivities of SEA;
- Key members of a multi-agency steering group should be established to oversee policy and practice in respect of gender issues;

- Independent assessments of the state of gender relations in this and other PSOs need to be carried out at regular periods to ensure policies and practices are functioning appropriately. Their remit would include examining gender mainstreaming strategies as well as considering the impact of mission on the local population;
- A well-publicised procedure for complaints needs to be established that can guarantee the confidentiality of the complainant and is accessible for those in HQ, Sector and Team Site areas. It should be available to the wider population as well as those employed within the UN;
- Long periods of peacekeeper inactivity should be managed through strong leadership and involve innovation and enthusiasm.

The UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)

- Directing attention to the extent to which the Code of Conduct is considered to be 'realistic', particularly with regard to the 'grey area' of prostitution;
- Give consideration to encouraging a harmonisation of national military's disciplinary code involving SEA and 'appropriate' gender relations as one way to make immediately relevant the rules under which UN military personnel function;
- An appraisal of the achievements and impact of the UPCC should be carried out and integrated into the gender components of the mission;
- The lack of a proactive and widely credible gender focal point is of continuing concern in UNAMSIL and thought should be given to the establishment of a dedicated OGA, or perhaps widening the remit of the UPCC as an interim measure;
- Any gender specialist is expected to have direct access to the SRSG;
- Issues of accountability, transparency and associated follow-up action (e.g. punishment of peacekeepers), should once again be placed at the centre of policy and awareness raising campaigns. These have slipped down the UNHCR/SCFUK report fades from consciousness;

- The ongoing challenge to be more effective in gender mainstreaming needs to be rigorously pursued, as the lack of female peacekeepers demonstrates;
- UNAMSIL needs to have a widely known, proactive and approachable community relations officer or officers (CROs). They would interface with the local population to ensure that grievances are treated seriously, and feedback delivered to those making complaints;
- Considerably more training needs to be organised and delivered (requiring additional resources), and in particular, more senior personnel need to familiarise themselves with local gender issues and the most appropriate ways in which to respond to them;
- One component of the appraisal of senior leaders should be their success or otherwise in dealing with issues around SEA and GBV involving UN personnel;
- The UPCC, while involving a range of stakeholders, needs to be more inclusive of civil society in respect of women's groups;
- Senior officials should be trained to recognize and be prepared to punish inappropriate behaviour amongst UN personnel in respect of SEA;
- Greater protection of survivors of abuse and support/counselling need to be publicised and offered as part of an overall package of proactive response to potential SEA;
- A record of perpetrators needs to be collated and should be used to determine the opportunities open to these individuals in relation to future employment with the UN. The experience of the UPCC should be shared/known among the main stakeholders and between missions (best practice). This should be linked to the Gender Advisor at HQ (DPKO) to build bridges between peacekeeping missions and share good practices;
- Data needs to be collected around incidences of SEA. A statistical base disaggregated by variables including geographical location, national military and nature of offence would provide an evidence base from which 'hot-spots' could be identified and response (training/awareness) targeted towards those that appear most at risk of exploitation.