

Civilian Capacity in United Nations Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Missions

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Summary

The role of civilians in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions has shifted from a peripheral support role to the core of contemporary peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, and the number of civilians have steadily increased over the years to approximately 22,000 in 2010. Civilians now constitute 20% of UN peacekeepers, and approximately 60% of the top twenty civilian contributing countries are from the Global South.

Whilst the UN finds it difficult to identify candidates in certain specialised categories, in general it has an oversupply of candidates. The main challenge facing the UN when it comes to recruitment, is processing the large number of applications it receives, selecting the most deserving candidates, and the time it takes to process an application from the moment a vacancy is announced until a person is deployed to take up the post. The linkages between training institutions, rosters and the UN recruitment system are underdeveloped. The aim of investing in training and rostering, namely shortening the time it will take to fill an urgently needed post with a suitably prepared candidate, is not being realised under the current relationship between the UN, training institutions and rosters.

The UN Secretary-General's 2009 report on peacebuilding provides a solid basis for engagement between the UN and the international peace operations community. The establishment of a global civilian capacity partnership that brings together the international training and rostering community, the UN system, and interested UN Member States, would contribute significantly to addressing these challenges.

Introduction

One of the most significant, but often overlooked, developments in United Nations (UN) is the transformation from military to civilian focussed peace missions. This change has come about as the mandates shifted from monitoring military ceasefires to supporting the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements. As these missions became more peacebuilding orientated, the role of civilians became more central, the number of civilian functions increased, and the role of civilians shifted from a peripheral support role to the core of contemporary peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. Civilians now represent approximately 20% of all UN peacekeepers and peacebuilders. As at 28 February 2010, the UN had almost 22,000 civilians deployed, including approximately 8,200 international staff, of which 2,400 were UN volunteers.²

The UN now deploys more civilian peacekeepers than all the other multilateral institutions combined. At the beginning of 2010, the European Union (EU) had deployed approximately 2,000 civilian personnel; the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) approximately 3,000, and the African Union (AU) deployed approximately 50 civilians in its current operation in Somalia.

There is a misperception that the Global South is under-represented in civilian posts within UN peace-

¹ The author wishes to recognize the editorial support of Walter Lotze and Andreas Øien Stensland from NUPI, as well as very useful comments and suggestions from the UN Civilian Capacity Review team in the UN Peacebuilding Support Office

² All peacekeeping related statistics in this paper, unless otherwise indicated, is based on the DPKO Fact Sheet, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/factsheet.pdf>, accessed on 16 June 2010, or on correspondence with DPKO and PBSO in June 2010.

keeping and peacebuilding missions. Yet among the top 20 nations from which civilian expertise is recruited, which contribute 49.8% of civilian expertise to UN missions, 31.1% are from the South.³ For example, 40% of civil affairs officers in UN missions are drawn from Africa, 14% from the Americas (excluding the USA), 10% from Asia and 3% from Oceania. Thus, a total of 67% of civil affairs officers in UN missions come from the Global South. Approximately 20% of all civil affairs officers are UN volunteers.

In comparison to UN peace operations, the number of civilians in African peace operations have, to date, been rather limited. There were approximately 50 civilian staff in the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS), compared to the 1,134 international civilian staff, 419 UN Volunteers and 2,557 national civilian staff in the current African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The ongoing African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has approximately 33 international staff and 15 national staff as of November 2009.

There is, however, a relatively high percentage of Africans in UN peace operations. There were 9 African countries among the top 20 contributors of international civilian staff to UN missions in 2009, namely: 2nd Kenya (4.8%), 7th Ghana (2.9%), 8th Sierra Leone (2.7%), 10th Ethiopia (2.3%), 11th Nigeria (2.2%), 14th Uganda (1.7%), 15th Cameroon (1.6%), 17th Tanzania (1.5%) and 18th Cote d'Ivoire (1.3%). In addition to the international staff, in 2009 the UN has employed 15,442 national professional and general service staff in UN missions, and of these 10,109, or approximately 75%, were Africans.⁴

Recruitment and Deployment Challenges

The UN finds it difficult to identify candidates in certain specialised categories, including in security sector reform, judicial and prisons management. This is partly a function of the availability of these skills in the marketplace in general. To address this problem DPKO has proposed the enhancement of the existing Standing Police Capacity to include justice and corrections specialists.

However, in general, UN experience shows that the assumption in the civilian capacity debate, namely that there is a world-wide shortage of civilian expertise, is flawed. The UN receives more than 150,000 applications per year for its civilian peacekeeping field positions.⁵ This means that the UN receives approximately 1,500 applications for every civilian position adver-

tised, of which approximately 50 are qualified to be considered for the position.⁶

Despite the high number of people eager to serve in UN missions, the UN suffers from high vacancy rates in its missions. The average vacancy rate of international civilian staff for UN operations between 2005 and 2008 has been around 22%.⁷ In some missions the figures are much higher, especially during the start-up phase. The UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) had a vacancy rate of 56% in 2008, the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) had a vacancy rate of 40% in 2005, and the UN Mission in Afghanistan had a vacancy rate of 42% at the beginning of 2010.⁸

The approximate 200 days that it takes the UN recruitment system to fill a vacancy, indicates that the system is slow and bureaucratic, and not meeting the deployment needs of the peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions context.⁹ Despite the large number of applicants, there are also persistent complaints from within the system about the quality and appropriateness of the candidates that are short-listed for selection.

The main challenge facing the UN is processing the large number of applications it receives, selecting the most deserving candidates, and the time it takes to process an application from the moment a vacancy is announced until a person is deployed to take up the post.

A number of recent reports and studies have addressed these problems and have highlighted the need to further strengthen the civilian contribution to peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions.¹⁰ However, the UN's recruitment approach seems to have overcome many of the dilemmas experienced by the EU and others. Because the UN does not rely on secondments, it does not have a problem attracting staff from the smaller and less developed countries. As mentioned earlier,

6 Durch, W.J., *Strengthening UN Secretariat Capacity for Civilian Post-Conflict Response*, article prepared for the Center on International Cooperation and the Government of Denmark's Meeting on Strengthening the UN's Capacity on Civilian Crisis Management, Copenhagen, 8-9 June 2004, p.9.

7 Solli, A., de Carvalho, B., de Coning, C.H. & Pedersen, M.F. 2009, *Bottlenecks to Deployment: The Challenges of Deploying Civilian Personnel to Peace Operations*, Security in Practice 3/2009 (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, p.10).

8 UNAMA Fact Box, Kabul: United Nations, 2010.

9 See *Low-Level Panel, Practical Steps to a More Effective and Efficient United Nations*, New York: www.lowlevelpanel.org, 2004, p.5.

10 In addition to those already referred to, see also: Chandran, R., Sherman, J., Jones, B., Forman, S., Le More, A. & Hart, A., *Rapid Deployment of Civilians for Peace Operations: Status, Gaps and Options* (New York: Center on International Cooperation, 2009), *Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict*, A/63/881-S/2009/304, New York: United Nations, 11 June 2009, and United Nations, *A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping*, New York: Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, July 2009.

3 2010 *Annual Review of Peace Operations* (New York: Center for International Cooperation).

4 2010 *Annual Review of Peace Operations* (New York: Center for International Cooperation).

5 Catriona Gourlay, *Rosters for the Deployment of Civilian Experts in Peace Operations, a DPKO Lessons Learned Study* (New York: United Nations, 2006, p. 6).



60% of the top twenty civilian contributing countries are from the Global South. The same phenomenon seems to apply to gender. The UN has a higher proportion of women in peace operations than most of its Member States have in their civil service. Currently, approximately 30% of the civilians in UN peace operations are women, but there are still disappointingly few women in senior positions.

Training and Rostering Challenges

The training of civilians should occur before recruitment, in preparation for deployment, on joining a mission (induction training), and following deployment (in-mission). Some training institutions, like the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), are increasingly focussing on in-mission training, that is aimed at sharpening skills needed in particular contexts or to address new needs not previously addressed.¹¹ All new civilian UN staff now also undergo generic induction training at the UN training centre in Brindisi before deployment. Most missions offer an induction course for all new staff upon entering a new mission. This will typically be conducted by the mission's training cell, but there have been cases where these courses have also been conducted by civilian training centres, as has been done by ACCORD for AMISOM and by Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna for OSCE missions.

The civilian training centres coordinate their work with each other through international and regional associations and there is a good degree of cooperation and coordination underway among the civilian training community.¹² However, the same cannot be said for the relationship between training and UN recruitment. The linkages between training institutions, rosters and the UN recruitment system are underdeveloped and under-explored.

Standby rosters are often seen as an obvious solution to the civilian capacity gap. The idea is that individuals are pre-trained, pre-identified and placed on a standby roster, and that they are then ready to be deployed when the need arises. The reality has, however, proven more complex. There are several different types of rosters. A *standing* capacity has staff that are employed on a full time basis, with the express purpose of being available as a surge capacity when the need arises. A *standby* capacity consists of persons pre-identified

to be deployed when the need arises, usually within a specified time-frame. Finally, a *rostered* capacity operates as a database of potential candidates that can be approached and whose suitability assessed as the need arises.¹³ There are several such rosters in existence, and most are either national rosters or civil society based.¹⁴

In the UN civilian capacity context there is a tension between calls for the development of more civilian rosters on the one hand, whilst on the other, the General Assembly resolutions that have restricted the use of gratis personnel in UN missions seem to have resulted in a general policy in the UN Secretariat not to work with rosters.¹⁵ The concerns behind these policies are understandable and need to be addressed, but cooperating with rosters need not have a negative impact on the UN's recruitment policies. Most UN agencies do cooperate with rosters without negative consequences. Rosters provide a complementary pool of potential candidates that the UN can consider, especially for those categories of personnel that it finds difficult to hire on the open market, but the choice and management of personnel remain with the UN. The purpose of investing in a roster – shortening the time it will take to fill an urgently needed post – is not realised under the current relationship between the UN and rosters.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The main challenge facing the UN is processing the large number of applications it receives, selecting the most deserving candidates, and the time it takes to process an application from the moment a vacancy is announced until a person is deployed to take up the post.

The UN Secretary-General's 2009 report on peacebuilding provides a solid basis for engagement between the UN and the international peace operations training and rostering community. The establishment of a global civilian capacity partnership that brings together the international training and rostering community, the relevant branches of the UN Secretariat and UN agencies, and interested UN Member States, would contribute significantly to addressing these challenges.

11 ACCORD (www.accord.org.za) has conducted Conflict Management for Peacekeepers and Peacebuilders Courses in AMISOM, MINURCAT, MONUC, ONUCI, UNAMID, UNMIL and UNMIS since 2008, and Civil-Military Coordination Courses in AMIS, AMISOM, MONUC and UNMIS since 2006.

12 Coordination occurs through the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centers (www.iaptc.org) and, for instance in Africa, through the African Peace Support Trainer's Association (www.apsta.org).

13 For example, CANADEM, a national NGO roster of Canadians, has around 15,000 persons in its database, and RedR, an international NGO roster specializing in engineering in emergencies, has approximately 20,000 candidates. See Catriona Gourlay, 2006, p.14.

14 Australia's new Deployable Civilian Capacity, the United Kingdom's Stabilization Unit roster, and the German Peace Operation Centre (ZIF) would be examples of national rosters, whilst the Norwegian Refugee Council's NORCAPS, CANADEM, and the African Civilian Standby Roster for International Humanitarian and Peacekeeping Missions (AFDEM), are examples of civil-society rosters.

15 General Assembly Resolutions 51/243 of 15 September 1997 and 52/234 of 26 June 1998.

An initial step could be to significantly improve the link between recruitment, rostering and training among the civilian peacekeeping and peacebuilding community. One of the objectives of such a partnership could be to support the UN in its efforts to reform the recruitment system, as it is clear that such a process would require political support among Member States, additional resources, a concerted effort on the side of the Secretariat, and support from civil society.

Steps that can be taken by the United Nations

- The primary focus of the UN Secretariat should be on improving the UN recruitment system, with the aim of reducing the time it takes to hire new staff and to improve internal standing capacities and rosters. It also needs to improve the quality of the personnel delivered to the field. The focus should thus be on addressing these shortcomings, rather than on developing new rosters and rapid deployable systems that will require considerable time and resources, and that have a poor track record of success.
- The UN Secretariat needs to be encouraged to enter into meaningful relationships with the training and rostering institutions because they represent existing capacities that can be made available to UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.

Steps that can be taken by Member States

- The current UN initiatives (Civilian Capacity Review and Recruitment System Reform) could benefit from increased and sustained Member State attention and support. Civilian capacity needs to be transformed from an internal technical issue to a strategic partnership issue. Clear benchmarks need to be identified, and the UN Secretariat needs to be given the resources necessary to achieve those

benchmarks. Interested Member States could create a 'Friends-of-Civilian Capacity' entity that can ensure that there are sustained and focussed attention on this issue and that the Secretariat is supported in a systematic and coordinated manner.

- The concerns of the Global South need to be addressed. Initiatives in the North could be paired with initiatives in the South with the aim of ensuring a fair and equitable supply. UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions could benefit from more civilian personnel from the South that have cultural, linguistic and applied skill sets that are appropriately matched with the societies hosting such missions.

Steps that can be taken by the Training and Rostering Community

- There are several existing institutions that specialise in civilian peacekeeping training and that are organised within the context of the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC). And there are several international rosters that are currently successfully providing civilian personnel to UN agencies and NGOs. These organisations are willing to support the UN to strengthen the linkages between training, rostering and recruitment. The training and rostering community could establish closer working relations with each other, and with the UN Secretariat, with a view to exploring how they could cooperate to strengthen the UN's civilian capacity.
- Whilst there is a good global spread of training institutions, most civilian training centres and most rosters seem to be clustered in the North. More can be done to encourage the development of civilian training and rostering in the Global South.

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