

DPKO stresses conduct and a duty of care

Over the past year, DPKO set in motion sweeping reforms of the culture of peacekeeping, initiated in the wake of revelations of sexual exploitation and abuse on peacekeeping missions during the previous year.

In June, the General Assembly approved a wide-ranging package of recommendations proposed by the Secretary-General's Advisor on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN Peacekeeping Personnel, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini.

Subsequently DPKO established Conduct and Discipline units at UN headquarters and in the eight largest peacekeeping operations, prepared a far-reaching policy on victims assistance, launched communications and public outreach strategies, designed and implemented mandatory training for personnel in all categories, strengthened management accountability, worked to improve living conditions and welfare for peacekeepers and made progress in amending legal agreements of various categories of peacekeeping personnel to include prohibitions on sexual exploitation and abuse. This included amendments to the memoranda of understanding between the UN and troop-contributing countries. The Secretary-General also appointed a

Group of Legal Experts to study ways to strengthen the criminal accountability of UN personnel who commit crimes while serving on UN peacekeeping operations. DPKO is also working with Member States to ensure effective follow up when offenders are repatriated.

A task force led by the UN Secretariat's two high-level policy groups--the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs--worked throughout the year to develop the details of these policy changes. Meanwhile, the Deputy Secretary-General visited five peacekeeping operations to carry the Secretary-General's message of zero tolerance for sexual misconduct.

In the field, investigations into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse continued, now handled by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). A comprehensive data base is being developed to track and report all misconduct cases. Since January 2004, investigations were completed of some 291 peacekeeping mission personnel, resulting in the dismissal of 16 civilians, the repatriation of 16 members of formed police units and 137 repatriations or rotations home on disciplinary grounds of military personnel, including six commanders.

The Peacekeeper's DUTY OF CARE

- You are privileged to have been selected to serve in a UN peacekeeping operation. This privilege confers upon you serious responsibilities towards the population you have come to serve.
- When serving in a peacekeeping operation, you represent the United Nations. The Blue Beret should be worn with pride and with awareness of its meaning to the world.
- The trust bestowed upon the United Nations and the mandate entrusted to the United Nations by the international community call upon you to exercise the highest standards of professional conduct and behaviour, whether on or off duty.
- UN peacekeepers are deployed into extraordinary situations in which local populations are often at extreme risk. The entire population that we serve are considered beneficiaries of our assistance. It is the duty of each peacekeeper to protect the vulnerable and to refrain from doing harm.
- UN peacekeepers have a unique opportunity to help populations emerging from difficult conflict situations and to contribute to a lasting peace and stability. Because of our sensitive role, misbehaviour of one single peacekeeper can diminish the positive role of the entire UN. Maintain respect for the local population and the highest standards of professionalism at all times.
- Any form of exploitation or abuse of the local population is unacceptable. UN standards of conduct forbid sexual exploitation and abuse. These standards apply to all peacekeepers irrespective of local customs or laws, or the customs or laws of your own country.
- The United Nations is an expression of the best hopes and aspirations of the international community. Each peacekeeper is an ambassador of this organization. Stay mindful of your role and of your responsibilities.

UN Photo by Ky Chung



Soldiers of ONUCI Ghanaian battalion 3 participate in sexual exploitation and awareness training, 22 July 2005

Mission such as MONUC in the DRC employed strict measures such as no-go areas and establishments, curfews and policies requiring troops to wear uniforms both on and off-duty. They also established focal points and hot lines to receive complaints from the public.

In order to reinforce the message that service with a UN peace operation is a privilege not a right, DPKO introduced the Peacekeepers Duty of Care (see box) and a film on conduct which stresses the crucial and unique relationships between individual peacekeepers and members of the host

population. DPKO is committed to eradicating exploitation and abuse with preventative and disciplinary measures while also reinforcing the message that UN peacekeepers make a real and tangible difference in peoples' lives all over the world in a service too important to be derailed by misconduct.

Gender in peacekeeping: an evolving field of practice

This year saw remarkable progress in women's participation in many aspects of peacekeeping in countries emerging from conflict.

In Afghanistan, an action plan developed by the **United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)** to improve the participation of Afghan women in political life continued to have a significant impact. The Election Task Force chaired by UNAMA's gender advisor worked with various women's groups to promote women's representation in the election process both as voters and candidates. In the September parliamentary elections, 44 percent of the voters registered were women, an increase of 4 percent from the 2004 presidential elections. In the lower house of the new Parliament, 68 of 249 seats were reserved for women. In addition, women also won seats in their own right in about 13 of the 34 provinces.

Since the appointment of the first gender advisor of the **UN Office in Burundi (ONUB)** in 2004, a major focus has been disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of women fighters. As a result of the gender advisor's lobbying, the category of "women fighters" was redefined to include not only active fighters but also women who supported the war in different roles, including porters, cooks and sexual slaves. Of the 485 women disarmed in Burundi, 231 joined the country's police force. Using the same method, the **UN Mission in Liberia** facilitated the disarmament and demobilization of more than 21,000 women and girls.

When a provisional survey showed that women made up only 25-30 percent of those who registered to vote in Liberian elections, the interim government launched a nation-wide awareness campaign encouraging women to register. UNMIL supported initiatives advocating the government to adopt laws that would give women 30 percent representation on all political parties' candidates lists. Although the Electoral Reform Law did not include quotas, the political parties' guidelines stipulated that 30 percent of the candidates be women. In November, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected Africa's first woman head of state.

A full third of lawmakers in the new Burundi parliament are women, including the speaker of parliament and several cabinet ministers.

Despite progress achieved in involving women in peacekeeping missions, major challenges remain, including ending sexual exploitation and abuse by some peacekeepers. The UN's zero tolerance policy and strategies of prevention, enforcement of discipline standards and regulations, training and raising awareness, which the UN started implementing together with the Member States in 2004, has started to have real impact.

While these steps are clearly needed, abuse cannot be prevented without empowering women and girls through gender mainstreaming, and the inclusion of gender issues in all aspects of the UN's work. To advance the efforts, the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guehenno,

issued new policy guidelines on gender mainstreaming in March, with an action plan finalized later in the year.

The adoption of gender sensitive approach in all aspects of peacekeeping remained a new area for the United Nations. Much more remains to be done to ensure that all peacekeeping personnel and Member States alike embrace gender mainstreaming as a critical strategy for making peacekeeping more effective. ■



A potential police recruit hoping to make the minimum height (1.60m) required for a woman to register to become a HNP recruit, Police Academy in Frere, Haiti, 16 November 2005

MINUSTAH Photo by Sophia Paris