

**BRIDGING THEORY & PRACTICE**



**A GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY  
PEACEKEEPING**

DR. SABRINA KARIM, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

DR. KYLE BEARDSLEY, DUKE UNIVERSITY

**PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS**

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## BRIDGING THEORY & PRACTICE

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A Guide to Implementing Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping  
Written by Dr. Sabrina Karim and Dr. Kyle Beardsley  
Edited by Briana Mawby  
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Washington, DC 20057

## **Abstract**

For the last two decades, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO) has been at the forefront of implementing reforms to peacekeeping missions to ensure gender equality. While recent trends show improvement, there is a long way to go to guarantee the full participation of women and protection of civilians from peacekeeping sexual exploitation and abuse. The following study delves into the participation and protection challenges and suggests that the way forward entails the adoption of “equal opportunity peacekeeping.” It argues for a shift in peacekeeping culture that includes: changes in leadership practices; standards for recruitment; standards for promotion/demotion; greater focus on training and professionalism; and the development of role models, mentors, and networks.

# **A Guide to Implementing Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping<sup>1</sup>**

Dr. Sabrina Karim and Dr. Kyle Beardsley

## **Introduction**

Since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), issues of gender equality have been at the forefront of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO). In particular, the UN has focused on increasing women's participation in peacekeeping operations and protecting civilians from sexual exploitation, abuse, and violence. Despite these commitments to improved participation and protection, many challenges remain. The numbers of female peacekeepers remain stagnant, and even when women are deployed to peacekeeping missions they tend to be sent to the safest missions, not necessarily to ones where they are most needed. Additionally, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by peacekeepers continues to be a problem in many missions.

The paper elaborates on these key challenges and suggests that the way forward is through promoting “equal opportunity peacekeeping.”<sup>2</sup> This type of peacekeeping involves a more holistic and transformational approach that focuses on altering existing structures in peacekeeping missions to be more egalitarian. A holistic approach is important to ensure that a focus on gender equality means more than simply increasing the number of female peacekeepers. This “add women and stir” approach is a common policy prescription for improving peacekeeping effectiveness and reducing sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, it means that in order to increase women's participation and ensure civilian protection, efforts must change the *culture* of missions through shifts in leadership practices,

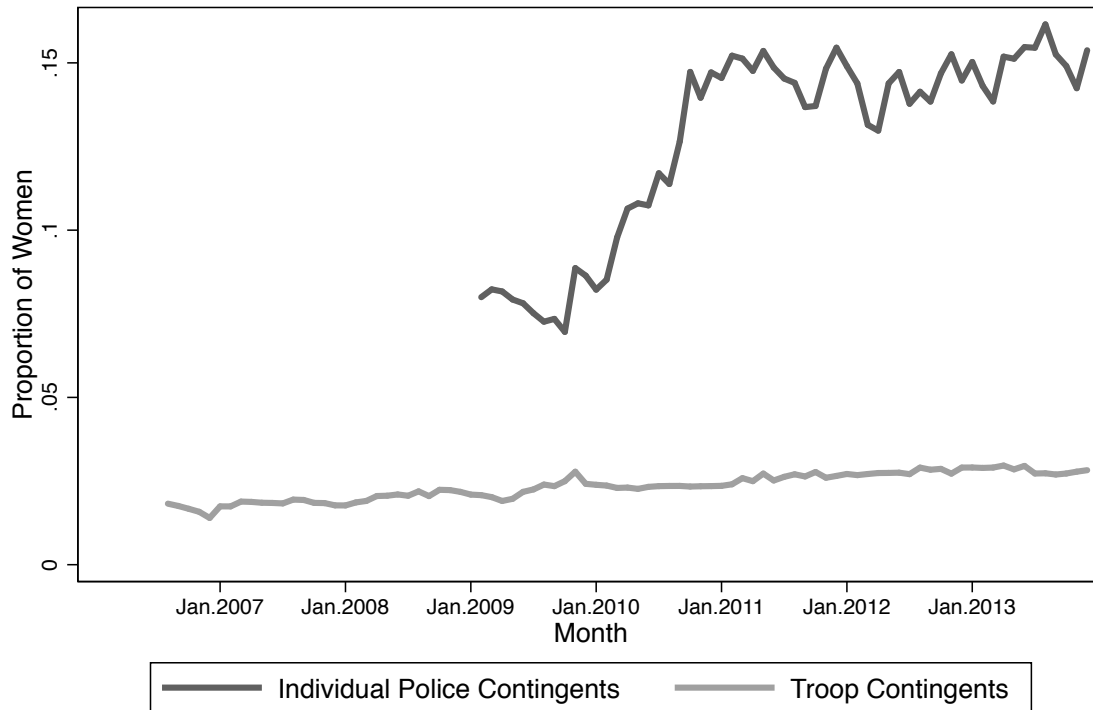
changes in standards for recruitment, changes in standards for promotion/demotion, focusing on training and professionalism, and developing role models, mentors, and networks for women.

The paper first outlines the current successes and challenges related to women's participation in peacekeeping and the protection of civilians and then suggests how to change the structures in peacekeeping missions that perpetuate gender inequality to improve participation and protection.

### **Women's Participation in Peacekeeping**

Since the passing of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 in 2000 (UNSCR 1325), the proportion of women in peacekeeping missions has steadily increased. According to the UN, between 1957 and 1989 a total of only twenty women served as UN peacekeepers. Today, however, the UN states that of the approximately 125,000 peacekeepers, women constitute three percent of military personnel and about 15 percent of police personnel.<sup>4</sup> In 2006, the UN started sex-disaggregating data on peacekeeping deployments for military personnel for police in 2009. While the overall proportions of women are still very low, the recent trend is positive. Today it is rare for missions to not have any female peacekeepers at all.<sup>5</sup> **Figure 1** depicts the monthly trend in women in UN peacekeeping troops and individual police contingents from late 2006 until the close of 2013.<sup>6</sup> Since December 2006, the proportion of female troops has doubled.<sup>7</sup> Since late 2009, the proportion of women in an individual police role has nearly doubled, although the upward trajectory has attenuated.

**Figure 1: Proportion of Female Peacekeepers<sup>8</sup> (percentage of total)**



Despite this trend in the participation of women in peacekeeping, levels remain very low. In 2009, in anticipation of UNSCR 1325's ten-year anniversary, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched a campaign to increase the share of female peacekeepers to 10 percent in military units and 20 percent in police units by 2014. The UN missions did not meet the deadline. Moreover, when it comes to the composition of senior ranks, women's representation is especially sparse. The UN deployed its first female Force Commander to the UN Mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP) only in 2014, and very few senior level peacekeepers, whether civilian, military, or police, are women.<sup>9</sup>

The UN's goals to increase women's representation are admirable, especially since the goals have come from the highest level of leadership in the UN, the Secretary-General.

However, the problem with increasing women's participation in peacekeeping is that troop and police contributions are determined at the contributing country level. That is, UN member states decide whether to send peacekeepers, and the numbers and types they deploy. The UN has little authority over these decisions. Currently, contributing countries do not have many incentives to prioritize sending female personnel. One exception has been India and Bangladesh, who have sent teams of all-female police units to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), respectively. Indian policymakers were keen to send the unit because they had available female personnel and because they believed that it would bring them prestige at the United Nations.<sup>10</sup>

Data provided by the UN on the proportion of female peacekeepers globally reveal which contributing countries tend to send more female peacekeepers to missions. For example, contributing countries with higher proportions of women in their domestic armed forces contribute higher proportions of women to peacekeeping military contingents but this is not the case for female police officers.<sup>11</sup> In other words, if countries have higher numbers of women in their national militaries, they are more likely to deploy female peacekeepers. If, however, countries have higher levels of female police in their national police forces, this does not appear to affect the number of female police officers the country sends to missions. One reason for this trend could be that the recruitment process for women in the military differs from the recruitment process for women in the police. While women in national militaries tend to deploy with their contingents, women from police forces often get selected or apply individually to join peacekeeping operations. The composition of police contributions is less dependent on the proportions of women in forces at home which makes it an avenue through which women's participation could increase.

In addition to a gender gap in terms of numbers, there are also differences in *where* women are deployed. Women are less likely to deploy to missions that are located in countries with low levels of development and that have experienced higher levels of violence, especially sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). While it is arguably in such countries that peacekeeping is most needed to improve the security environment, particularly as the UNSC has passed several resolutions on SGBV,<sup>12</sup> women are systematically excluded from these missions.<sup>13</sup> Within peacekeeping missions, such as UNMIL, women are being excluded from engaging in a wide variety of roles and from being able to leave the base and interact with other women and with locals.<sup>14</sup> Such restrictions also preclude female peacekeepers from being proactive in missions and contributing fully.

This practice of a “gendered protection norm,” where women are excluded from fully participating in a wide range of missions, is harmful for the peacekeeping mission and makes it less effective.<sup>15</sup> The UN has long argued that female peacekeepers are needed to empower women in the host community by helping to address the specific needs of female ex-combatants during the process of demobilizing and reintegrating into civilian life, making the peacekeeping force approachable to women in the community, interviewing survivors of gender-based violence, mentoring female cadets at police and military academies, and interacting with women in societies where they are prohibited from speaking to men.<sup>16</sup> If women are *not* going to the missions where these tasks are most needed—to the more dangerous missions—and if they are prevented from interacting with locals, these activities are not completed thereby making the mission less effective.

Nevertheless, there are factors that predict higher levels of women’s participation in peacekeeping. When contributing countries have strong records of gender equality as measured



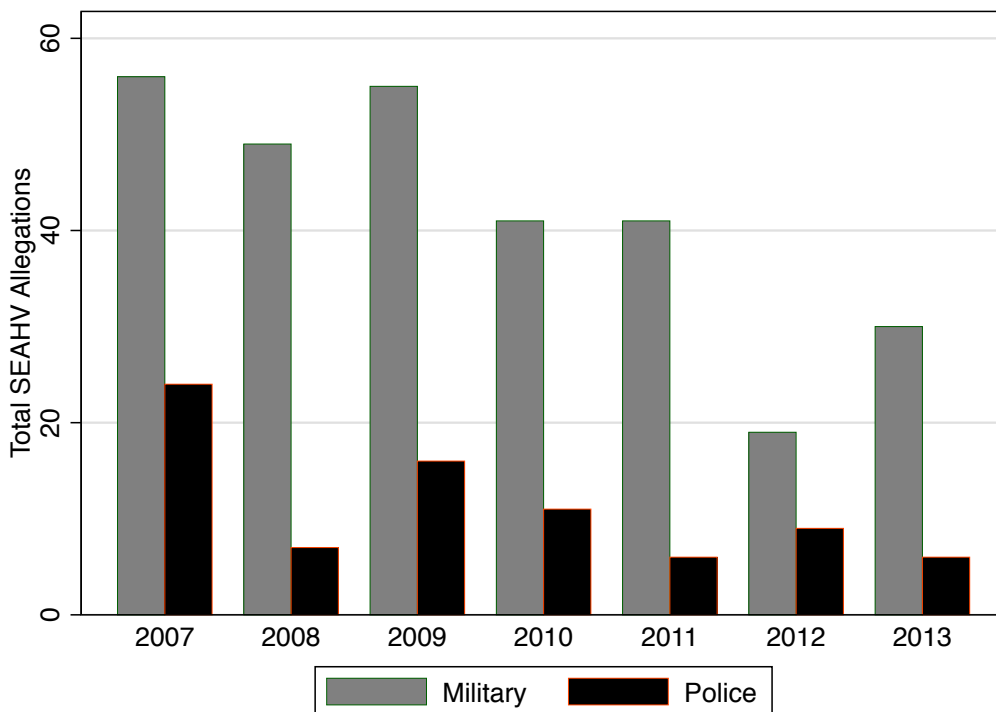
by the participation of women in the labor force, they tend to deploy more female peacekeepers. In other words, when women regularly and visibly contribute to society outside of the home, it may be more appropriate for them to also join the security forces and be deployed.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the data reveal that the key to women's participation relies on changes in the culture of home country institutions – particularly their military and police institutions – that point towards greater gender equality. In this way, changes in gender equality practices, roles, priorities, and the activities of contributing country militaries and police forces can lead to women's increased participation in peacekeeping.

### **Civilian Protection: Reducing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, Harassment, and Violence (SEAHV)**

Allegations about peacekeepers' involvement in widespread sexual misconduct initially emerged in the UN mission in Cambodia (1993) and were followed by reports from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), East Timor, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Despite the fact that many allegations emerged before 2000, it was not until 2003 that the UN Secretary-General announced a zero-tolerance policy forbidding peacekeepers from exchanging money, food, help, or anything of value for sex.<sup>18</sup> Further, it was not until 2005 that the UN DPKO established the Conduct and Discipline Team to train peacekeepers about the new policy, to enforce it, and to conduct investigations of its violations.<sup>19</sup> In 2007 the policy was extended to all UN personnel (not just peacekeepers) and the Conduct and Discipline Team within the UN DPKO became the Conduct and Discipline Unit within the UN's Department of Field Support.

Despite the development of a framework for reducing sexual exploitation and abuse by mission personnel, sexual exploitation and abuse remain a problem.<sup>20</sup> **Figure 2** tracks the number of reported accusations of sexual exploitation and abuse made across missions. It is important to bear in mind that sexual exploitation and abuse allegations are likely a drastic undercount of actual offenses because most victims do not feel comfortable reporting.<sup>21</sup> Reports of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers against locals are far too common in many missions.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, sexual exploitation and abuse is not only a problem between peacekeepers and locals, but also within missions. Within UNMIL, female peacekeepers listed sexual harassment as one of the biggest impediments to their service as a peacekeeper.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 2: Total SEAHV Allegations by Peacekeepers<sup>24</sup>**



Efforts have been taken recently to “name and shame” member states that have received allegations. Since 2015, the UN has openly listed the nationality of the alleged perpetrator, whether the victim was an adult or child, the type of allegation, number of victims, paternity claim, and the results of the allegation. This is a step in the right direction but it also highlights a dilemma; the UN has a difficult time receiving enough personnel to fill their mandates for peacekeeping missions and they depend on contributing countries to provide troops and police. If they “name and shame” contributing countries, this could dissuade countries from sending any troops and police at all. Thus, using “sticks” such as “naming and shaming,” while perhaps being a deterrent, could also have the adverse consequence of reducing the numbers of peacekeeping contributions globally. Naming and shaming might be best paired with some form of “carrot,” which is discussed below.

As with increasing the representation of female peacekeepers, there are also country level characteristics that explain variation in the numbers of allegations. In particular, when missions consist of more personnel from countries that score better on multiple indicators of gender equality, there are fewer allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>25</sup> This means that just like with participation, a value for gender equality among personnel may be key for ensuring that peacekeepers do not harm local populations (and even their fellow colleagues within the mission). Again, the focus is on changing cultures and practices both within peacekeeping missions and in contributing country militaries and police forces. When men see their female counterparts as equals, they may be less likely to commit abuses at home and abroad. Shifting beliefs and norms about gender equality among peacekeepers, particularly men, is arguably the key to preventing abuses. In this way, a potential carrot to accompany the stick could be rewards for positive, gender equal behavior in peacekeeping missions.

## **A Move Toward Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping?**

One of the main themes that emerged from the previous two sections about participation and protections is that fostering a culture of gender equality in contributing country militaries and police forces and in peacekeeping missions could go a long way to increasing and ensuring women's full participation in peacekeeping missions and also guaranteeing civilian protection. When full participation is achieved and peacekeeping abuse is non-existent, missions will be more effective because women will be deployed where needed and able to engage in the range of tasks necessary for successful operations. As well, the reputation of peacekeeping missions would not be tarnished by sexual exploitation and abuse scandals.

If a culture of gender equality is important for peacekeeping effectiveness, then it is important to develop concrete steps to foster such a culture. The good news is that gender equality can be learned,<sup>26</sup> as institutional cultures are malleable. Through changes, minor and major, in practices, rules, policies, and behaviors, structures that perpetuate inequality will change to become more egalitarian. At the national level, examples of this cultural shift include Sweden's redirection of their national military towards a "post-national defense" or a focus on meeting humanitarian and gender equality challenges abroad,<sup>27</sup> or removal of combat bans in the U.S. military which then allowed women to participate in all areas of operations and recognized that women were already doing so. Within peacekeeping missions, these changes have included force commanders making it a point to meet with female soldiers in private to discuss their challenges as was done in UNMIL, or the creation of an UNPOL female peacekeeping network.

There are at least five areas of change needed in order for equal opportunity peacekeeping to become a reality: shifts in leadership practices; changes in standards for recruitment; changes in standards for promotion/demotion; focus on training and

professionalism; and the development of role models, mentors, and networks. Proposed changes and concrete policy recommendations follow.

### *Leadership Practices*

Cultural change towards gender equality is not possible unless leadership is behind the change or at least supports it. Support and stewardship by leaders are particularly important for military and police organizations which rely on a hierarchical structure. Lower-ranked soldiers are always expected to take orders and respect higher-ranked soldiers. Soldiers and police officers follow the examples set by higher-ranked officers and military and police institutions rarely have dissenters. Moreover, senior officials also have leeway in making structural changes without hurting their image. Lynne Segal writes that the senior commanders already “have reputations for being committed to the success of the institution, given their elite position and military record, allowing them to take on feminized traits without fear.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, institutional changes must start at the top with leadership taking an active stance on issues related to gender inequality in the institution. If senior officers take the participation and protection of women seriously, then the norm is likely to have trickle-down effects.

In peacekeeping, mission leadership stems from the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Force Commander, and Police Commissioner. These leaders serve as models for their subordinates and also have substantial influence over the direction of the mission. As mentioned above, they lead by example. In UNMIL, one of the practices of the Force Commander was to visit always with female personnel in contingents so that they could feel open to discuss their issues without male superiors in the room. This small action demonstrated that the Force Commander was serious about addressing the concerns of female

peacekeepers. The SRSG, Force Commander, and Police Commissioner can take larger actions to demonstrate their commitment to gender equality such as prioritizing projects that encourage collaboration among female peacekeepers. Regardless, the leaders in the mission have the ability to make or break cultural changes.

One way to ensure that leaders will commit to changing the culture of missions is by being selective in choosing leaders. When selecting individuals for these positions, it is important to ensure that they hold gender equal values and that they are aware of gender issues. Currently, the Secretary-General controls the selection process for the SRSG, Force Commander, and Police Commissioner. The selection process for these positions is rigorous, requiring a certain number of years of experience, rank, and other factors. Within this selection process, it is possible in the vetting process to include questions about candidates' beliefs about gender equality, use implicit bias tests, and evaluate other characteristics that are not normally valued such as empathy and caring, communication, and listening skills, among others. Thus, the policy recommendation moving forward is to focus on demonstrating to military and police leaders the importance of gender equality for operational effectiveness so that they will prioritize a change in culture as well as expand the selection criteria for leaders to include norms of gender equality.

### *Changes in Recruitment Standards*

One of the main means to foster a culture of gender equality is through reforms in standards of what constitutes appropriate skills and character for the military, police, and peacekeeping. Standards signal the type of values, skills, and character traits that are prized in an institution, and they are used for recruitment and promotion/demotion.

Clearly, standards that are based on biology and privilege men should be re-evaluated. Standards in security organizations are often based on male physiological advantages such as strength, and not in areas where women have a physiological advantage, such as agility.<sup>29</sup> They are also often based on skills and competencies that privilege men such as willingness to take risks, independence, stoicism, assertiveness, competitiveness, and confidence. Other skills that are necessary beyond fitness and that privilege women, such as the ability to listen, communicate, and collaborate are also valuable, but they are often not prized equally. In this sense, organizations are missing out on “feminine” qualities which would make the institution more gender equal. Moreover, these are important skills for any organization’s overall effectiveness and can be easily incorporated as standards.

One concern with changing standards may be that prioritizing these “feminine” traits and characteristics as new standards or as new criteria for recruitment could weaken military and police effectiveness. As new standards are adopted, they may dilute the existing skills that are necessary for effective combat and protection. However, the inclusion of different standards need not, indeed must not, eliminate existing standards. For instance, the ability to drive and shoot weapons would be as equally valued as the ability to listen and communicate. The new standards should not in any way diminish the value of driving and weapons skills, and they may actually make militaries, police, and peacekeeping institutions *more* effective, not less effective, with a deeper toolkit to achieve a wider array of objectives.

If standards are the focus of cultural change, then they also have the potential to solve the problem of women’s low participation. If we assume that “male-dominated” characteristics and traits are normally distributed (a bell curve), there is overlap between men and women on these traits; however, on average, men are more likely to adopt them. Further, if these skills and

characteristics are the main selection criteria for recruitment and promotion, then more men than women (on average) will be recruited and promoted. This is the status quo. However, if more “feminine” standards were included there would be some overlap between men and women but women might be more likely to have these other traits and hence do well in the recruitment process. Changing standards to be more equitable is arguably, then, a “natural” way to increase women’s representation. Moreover, it has the added benefit of shifting the culture of the organization towards greater equity which in the long-term makes it more effective.

Based on the above discussion, standards for recruitment into peacekeeping missions should be re-assessed. Currently, the UN requires that candidate peacekeepers pass written tests and undergo interviews. It also requires candidate peacekeepers be able to drive manual cars and use computers. As a part of the candidacy vetting process, it is possible to administer tests that assess individual beliefs about gender equality while also assessing potential recruits based on both masculine and feminine traits. For example, implicit bias tests can be included into written tests or during the interview phase, allowing the UN to assess the quality of applicants on a gender-awareness dimension. Questions can also be asked about the potential recruit’s views about caring activities, empathy, communication, and other characteristics important for peacekeeping. These questions can be administered by the panels composed of UN officials who decide on whether applicants are suitable for entering the United Nations and for those who have applied to be a part of missions. They can also be applied at the country-level when individuals apply within countries to join missions. This kind of targeted recruitment and screening means making equality a value desired in all potential recruits.

Contributing countries can also change standards to be more accommodating to groups historically prevented from joining the military and police such as women and minorities. For



example, some countries require five years of service before officers can apply for peacekeeping operations but this qualification can be reduced to three years. Such a change would allow more women to participate in missions, given that they are likelier to have joined the institution more recently than men.

Thus, the recommendations include re-evaluating the standards security organizations, including peacekeeping, use for recruitment to ensure that they represent both masculine and feminine traits and that they include tests for implicit bias. Additionally, contributing countries could change standards to ensure that historically underrepresented groups are better able to participate in peacekeeping.

#### *Changes in Promotion, Demotion, and Discipline*

Another area where cultural change is needed is in standards for promotion and discipline, i.e., carrots and sticks. Promotion and demotion within security organizations and peacekeeping missions could be based on the same changed standards discussed above. If standards reflect both masculine and feminine traits, and if a standard of gender equality is introduced, then awards and discipline can be administered accordingly.

The UN heads of mission (Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Police Commissioners, and Force Commanders) have leverage over personnel matters. Promotions within the mission are at the discretion of heads of mission who control the distribution of positions within missions. For example, individuals can request positions within missions, and such requests could be prioritized based on individuals that have performed well, including adhering to principles of gender equality. Moreover, during medal parades and other ceremonies,<sup>30</sup> special medals can be given for individuals who have improved gender equality,

paid particular attention to gender issues, or helped address concerns related to sexual exploitation and abuse. Awards could also be given out to peacekeepers who consistently exhibit exemplary masculine *and feminine* virtues. Finally, within contributing countries, leaders of contingents have discretion over suggesting promotions based on performance in the peacekeeping mission (if such service makes soldiers and police officers eligible for promotion). A part of the promotion process should focus on how well the individual under consideration adheres to the principle of gender equality during the mission. If these kinds of rewards were to become highly valued in security and peacekeeping institutions, they could help send a clear message about what types of identities, actions, and characteristics are valued in the institution. Rewards could expand existing ideas of heroism to include (not replace) other forms of heroism, such as empathizing with the needs of locals and responding accordingly.

At the country-level, we have seen the UN adopt naming and shaming in order to reduce SEA. This “stick” tactic can be accompanied by a “carrot” in the form of awards by the UN to member states based on their performance on gender equality in missions. For example, India and Bangladesh could be eligible for such an award due to their commitment to the deployment of all-female police units. These awards could come with added benefits such as well-paid placements for country staff at the UN.

The use of awards and promotions to change culture should not be limited to peacekeeping but can also apply in national militaries and police forces. For example, in many national militaries, bravery and courage are highly valued and medals are given to celebrate accomplishments related to these traits. Similar medals could also be given for exemplary efforts in areas related to communication or caring. In this way, a wide range of actions is valued, not just masculine ones.

Along with promotion and awards, discipline and demotion (sticks) are important vehicles through which to change mission culture. Within the mission and at home in contributing countries discipline and demotion should be directly linked to performance related to gender issues. In peacekeeping missions, individual contributing countries have greatest discretion over their personnel's demotion; however, mission leadership does have some ability to punish individuals for not conducting themselves in a manner consistent with principles of gender equality. One way to do so is to base permission for mission extension on individual behavior. Individuals who have personal conduct records that do not reflect a value for gender equality should not be assigned to their desired positions, have their service extended, receive pay, or be eligible for any awards and medals.

Additionally, leaders must take a strong stance against gender inequality within missions. They should do everything from simply correcting soldiers and police officers when they use gendered language, such as "stop behaving like a girl," to fully disciplining them for more serious infractions, such as sexual exploitation and abuse. It may not seem like using gendered language or other small infractions makes much of a difference, but in reality these small comments and gestures are a part of a larger culture, similar to the idea of "rape culture," that creates inequalities for women.

Sexual exploitation and abuse must be taken seriously and transgressors punished. Currently, sending countries have sole discretion over sanctioning violators of the UN's zero-tolerance policy. Most often, they are sent home as punishment and never prosecuted. The sending countries could take violations more seriously by consistently prosecuting transgressors, thereby setting an example for the rest of the contingent or unit. The UN could give incentives to contributing countries by rewarding countries that prosecute offenders of sexual exploitation and

abuse. In this vein, the UN should also incentivize peacekeepers to help individuals report sexual exploitation and abuse by establishing clearer and more lucrative whistleblower protections. Thus, the recommendations include using standards of gender equality for promotions and demotion/discipline, rewarding individuals and countries that perform well when it comes to gender equality, ensuring that leaders take a strong stance against gender inequality, punishing offenders, and doing more to incentivize and protect whistleblowers.

### *Fostering Role Models, Mentors, and Networks*

One of the most important ways to ensure that culture changes is to provide women with role models, mentors, and networks in an institution where they are outnumbered. This allows for the creation of safe spaces to discuss issues, the transfer of information, and learning. It could also increase women's participation in missions because women are able to learn from other women about opportunities and the recruitment process.

Veteran female peacekeepers could serve as mentors and role models. Indeed, women peacekeepers themselves have been successful in the recruitment of more female peacekeepers. Women who have served can act as role models when traveling to different countries—and also within their home countries—to talk about their experiences and encourage other women to participate in missions. In particular, the UN should be plugged into different venues where potential recruits convene, such as the International Association for Women Police (IAWP), which has an annual convention. The UN DPKO could set up a booth and even host panels to provide information about peacekeeping during which veteran female United Nations Police (UNPOL) officers could provide information about their experience and answer questions. Recently, the United Nations Standing Police Capacity hosted a booth and panels at the 2016

convention in Barcelona. They were able to get the names of over one hundred female officers who were interested in learning more about peacekeeping. Thus, the UN should become involved with other police and military networks to provide information about female peacekeeping. This would not overburden UN resources as it would only require selecting officers of both sexes to serve as liaison officers for recruitment.

Role models in the form of veteran female peacekeepers could potentially have a cascade effect on female participation. If female soldiers and police officers learn that there are female peacekeepers in missions, they may be more likely to join missions. In this sense, participation could beget more participation and precipitate a regime change in the gender balance of peacekeeping missions. This cascade effect also applies to contributing country military and police organizations. The recruitment of individuals into national militaries and police starts in high school, which means that women should be present in drives to encourage girls to join security forces.

Similar to establishing role models, assigning informal or formal mentors might go a long way in encouraging female peacekeeper participation. Mentors could again be current or veteran female peacekeepers who are assigned to women interested in joining missions. Based on a survey on the potential female recruits from the 2016 IAWP convention in Barcelona, those who had a mentor in the UN were about 40 percent more likely to say that they wanted to join a peacekeeping mission in the next 1-5 years.<sup>31</sup> This signals mentorship as an important vehicle through which participation might increase. Additionally, mentors could also be assigned to current female peacekeepers so that they have help and guidance from other women who have been through the process. Female mentors are particularly important within missions if female

peacekeepers have questions that they feel uncomfortable asking men or that men cannot address.

In addition to supplying mentors to potential female recruits and existing female peacekeepers, the institutional environment should be reformed to improve women's access to professional and social networks. Women are often prevented from collaborating together in missions and female peacekeepers rarely interact with one another, especially across different mission components (police, military, and civilian).<sup>32</sup> Peacekeeping missions should provide opportunities for women to work together on projects and to socialize with other members of the peacekeeping mission. Such collaboration is likely to provide momentum for important new initiatives and to enable women to build networks of influence so that they can team up to achieve some of the gender-related mandates. Prohibiting coordination and collaboration by women only restricts their ability to work together on important aspects of the mission.

Related to networks of influence, participation and promotion, peacekeeping missions can still maintain the flavor of an "old boys' network". This means that women have a disadvantage if they are less welcomed into the types of informal and social interactions that foster such networks. As a counterweight, the peacekeeping mission should help provide social and professional networking that women can better access through formal mentoring programs. At the least, workshops where women can talk to one another about problems they are facing in the mission or about the realities they will face in the mission during pre-deployment training are necessary. Women and men in leadership positions should ensure that female peacekeepers have equal access to networking opportunities. One hopeful example is the Office of Military Affairs, which has initiated the establishment of the Female Military Peacekeepers Network (FMPKN) to

create a space of mutual support, mentoring, training and advocacy for UN female military staff.<sup>33</sup>

### *Focusing on Training and Professionalization*

Soldiers and police officers who make up peacekeeping forces become soldiers and police officers through training. Training usually occurs at the nascent stages of one's career, whereas professionalization involves engaging in practices throughout a career to increase competency in the job. Trainings and other professionalization opportunities have the potential to shape values for gender equality.

Currently, gender training is a mandatory part of pre-deployment preparation and is included in mission orientation activities.<sup>34</sup> Duration and content involves one or two days on the concepts of gender equality, mainstreaming, and gender perspectives in peacekeeping missions. This one-off training may not be enough to change perceptions and behavior that have been historically entrenched in national militaries and police institutions. Additionally, observations and anecdotal evidence from peacekeepers suggest that many peacekeepers dismiss this type of training and perceive it as too academic, impractical, and not worth serious consideration.

Several reforms could help ensure that training in peacekeeping missions on gender equality is taken seriously.<sup>35</sup> Gender training should be integrated into all other training and be conducted not only by gender experts (usually gender focal points or civilians from the gender unit in missions) but also by unit leadership to demonstrate the seriousness of the training. Both men and women should participate in providing training about gender equality. Training should be practical and not theoretical, and include role-playing and personal examples. Instead

of calling training sessions “gender training,” which may deter certain populations who have yet to be convinced that gender dynamics matter, such training should be re-framed as training to improve mission efficacy and legitimacy.

Training can be conducted at all levels, including at the leadership level. For example, the 1325 Review suggests that the “SRSGs and Force Commanders (and Police Commissioners) should receive a week-long mandatory training week at headquarters on the prevention of sexual violence and abuse and other protection issues.”<sup>36</sup> Missions should also invest in developing tailored gender training for senior managers to help them integrate a gender perspective into their work. At first, gender focal points, gender units, and/or gender advisers can conduct gender training for senior officials. Then “train the trainer” methods can be employed to make sure all members of the mission are taking ownership of a gender approach. The gender focal points, gender units, and/or gender advisers can train key leaders of contingents or units in civilian, police, and military fields, and then observe these leaders train the others in their units. Using a “train-the-trainer” initiative ensures that such training is fully institutionalized and not just compartmentalized as a matter for the gender focal points, gender units, and/or gender advisers.

Training is particularly important at home as well. Perpetuation of gender inequality often starts in national training academies, meaning that such locations should be focal points for changing the practices that cultivate the dominance of certain masculine traits. In part, the reforms need to continue to help educate and remind personnel about the value that different masculinities and femininities can bring and of the pernicious consequences of gender power imbalances including discrimination, exclusion, and sexual exploitation and abuse. Examples in Sweden show that re-conceptualizing training can shift gender power imbalances in the military. Annica Kronsell and Robert Egnell, et. al have argued that although the ratios of women to men



in Swedish peacekeeping contingents remain low, levels of gender awareness are high due to rigorous training protocols that have transformed the culture of the defense forces.<sup>37</sup> For example, Swedish military training now emphasizes respect for laws against discrimination and a tolerance of difference through “new values for defense.”<sup>38</sup>

Military and police training academies might include reforms that target particular hazing rituals that denigrate women and other “out-groups.” Recent scholarship challenges the notion that “out-groups” have to be created for military effectiveness. Robert J. MacCoun, Elizabeth Kier, and Aaron Belkin find that task cohesion (a sense of shared commitment to the unit’s mission) rather than social cohesion (the strength of interpersonal bonds among members) may be more important for military effectiveness.<sup>39</sup> Here, soldiers maintain close technical ties that are the result of a common goal, and these ties lack any kind of emotion or sentimental bonding. In other words, professionalization of groups and focusing on task competency may be more important for military effectiveness than perpetuating practices such as hazing or defaming “out-groups,” as a way to create bonds among soldiers.

Another area of training should focus on building the capacity of women (and men) who are new to peacekeeping or who are likely to become peacekeepers. This training should focus on building some of the healthy, useful, but more masculine skills and characteristics that are dominant. According to some peacekeepers, women have less training than men, which makes them less competitive for promotions and also to participate in peacekeeping missions in the first place. For example, one of the biggest impediments for female peacekeeping personnel is that they are often behind in driving skills, computer skills, and language skills. As such, peacekeeping missions can provide training to peacekeepers in driving, computing, foreign languages, and other technical areas. This can be done at the contributing country level or in the

form of in-service training within missions. As an example of the former, the Ghanaian police have benefited from a Norwegian program where the Norwegians have trained female Ghanaian officers in driving and computer skills.<sup>40</sup> Scholarships for women from different parts of the world can be provided so that they can participate in such training. Scholarships should especially be provided for women who are identified as potential leaders. As another example, UN Women has recently begun conducting two-week courses exclusively for female military officers, as part of a professional development opportunity.<sup>41</sup>

In the form of in-service training, UN missions should offer different classes and make sure that women have better access to them. Such professionalization opportunities should be accessible to all members of the mission. Contingent leaders should allow female peacekeepers and others to leave the base to attend these trainings. Currently, in many peacekeeping operations, women are not allowed to leave bases, which inhibits them from participating in this type of in-service training.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, gender training for men (and women) could also be held in other parts of the world or at UN peacekeeping training centers. This makes the training more prestigious and male officers may take it more seriously. Here it would be helpful to target *not* the most qualified individuals who already display characteristics of gender equality but those individuals in militaries and police institutions that exhibit the least understanding of the importance of gender equality.

Out of the five components of equal opportunity peacekeeping, the international community has perhaps been more successful with training and professionalization when it comes to making changes to mission culture as a number of best practices have been highlighted here. Nevertheless, continued efforts must ensure that gender training is meaningful to the

participants. This means integrating trainings into other trainings, ensuring that leaders are both being trained and also conducting trainings, using train-the-trainer methods, employing the language of operational effectiveness, and making sure that those individuals who attend additional trainings in other parts of the world are those who really need the training. Additionally, training institutes should refrain from using hazing to create cohesion and instead use professionalism as a way to create bonding within units. Finally, training programs in contributing countries (and in-service trainings) specifically for women should be given resources so that women can develop the skills they need to participate in peacekeeping missions.

## **Conclusion**

Since the deployment of the first peacekeeping mission in 1948, there has been much progress in women's participation and protection in peacekeeping missions. However, many challenges remain. In particular, the proportion of women in peacekeeping missions is still low and they are not fully participating in the wide range of missions. Moreover, local women and female peacekeepers are still often targets of sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, and violence. In order to overcome some of these barriers, we suggest that the UN adopts a model of equal opportunity peacekeeping whereby cultural changes occur at the leadership, standards, recruitment, promotion, demotion/discipline, training/professionalization, and mentorship/network levels.

Some may suggest that the obstacles for women related to peacekeeping reflect challenges that exist in other institutions and in society more broadly. We argue, however, that the stakes involved in peacekeeping missions are high and suggest that there is a need to move

ahead even if progress in other spheres is lagging. Peacekeepers are sometimes the first responders to crisis and conflict meaning that their presence can have a profound impact on conflict-ridden countries. What they do on the ground can have lasting, long-term consequences. Equal opportunity peacekeeping is essential for ensuring that post-conflict countries start off on the right foot as peacekeeping missions are models for how gender equality in institutions can function.

Others may argue that upsetting gender hierarchies within military and police forces such that masculinities are no longer dominant will make these institutions less effective in their intended purposes: protection and combat.<sup>43</sup> The pursuit of gender equality, however, need not and should not eliminate masculine traits from the security sector. Indeed, both sexes and their manifestations through masculinity and femininity can be valorized. Such equal opportunity has the potential to prevent the negative effects of gender power imbalances from materializing while still valuing traditional masculine characteristics. There are some examples of militaries and police institutions that have proceeded down this path toward egalitarianism with positive results. For example, both Sweden and Norway have taken steps to be more equal without losing ground on effectiveness.<sup>44</sup> As such, it is important to establish that the changes suggested here will not detract from military and police effectiveness. In fact, it may actually improve both because all men and women will be able to make full use of their talents without having to worry about discrimination and sexual exploitation and abuse. Additionally, new skills will be brought to the art of protection that were previously discounted.

Certainly, there are no easy fixes to achieve equal opportunity peacekeeping. Challenges to implementation include a lack of political will, inadequate resources, politicization of appointments and placements, insufficient information (especially about the effects of training),

institutional inertia, cultural taboos, and vague language. Achieving transformation requires more than just simple policy changes; it demands the will to change such policies. Unless all parties fully accept the importance of tackling power imbalances in and through peacekeeping missions, change will not come quickly. Changing the mission culture requires commitment and resources by all relevant parties in the mission: the UN Security Council; UN General Assembly; the UN Secretary-General; the Secretariat; UN DPKO; contributing countries; mission leadership and personnel. Finally, more information is needed to understand which types of change are most effective in creating transformation. These are real challenges that may impede progress on achieving equal opportunity peacekeeping. Nevertheless, they are not insurmountable. Moving forward, there is tremendous potential for peacekeeping operations to ensure equal opportunity for all women and men.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Portions of this text are adapted from Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping: Women, Peace, and Security in Post-Conflict States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), and reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> The term is developed by Karim and Beardsley (2017).

<sup>3</sup> See Donna Bridges and Debbie Horsfall, "Increasing Operational Effectiveness in UN Peacekeeping: Toward a Gender-Balanced Force," *Armed Forces & Society* 36, no.1 (2009): 120-30. See also Kristen Cordell, "Security or Tokenism: Evaluating Role of Women as Peacekeepers Within the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping," Peace Research Institute Oslo, accessed March 2, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> See United Nations Peacekeeping, "Women and Peacekeeping," accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/womeninpk.shtml>.

<sup>5</sup> Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*; Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, "Ladies Last: Peacekeeping and Gendered Protection," in *A Systematic Understanding of Gender, Peace, and Security: Implementing UNSC 1325*, ed. Ismene Gizelis and Louise Olsson (Oxford: Routledge, 2015); Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, "Female Peacekeepers and Gender Balancing: Token Gestures or Informed Policymaking?" *International Interactions* 39, no. 4 (2013): 461-88.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Figure taken from Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

<sup>9</sup> Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York: UN Women, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Leslie Pruitt, *The Women in Blue Helmets: Gender, Policing, and the UN's First All-Female Peacekeeping Unit* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Karim and Beardsley, "Ladies Last."

<sup>12</sup> Examples include UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1960, and 2106.

<sup>13</sup> Karim and Beardsley, "Female Peacekeepers and Gender Balancing."

<sup>14</sup> Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

<sup>15</sup> See also Sabrina Karim, "Re-Evaluating Peacekeeping Effectiveness: Does Gender Neutrality Inhibit Progress?" *International Interactions* (2016),

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03050629.2017.1231113?journalCode=gini20>.

<sup>16</sup> See United Nations Peacekeeping, "Women and Peacekeeping."

<sup>17</sup> Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

<sup>18</sup> The "zero-tolerance policy" bans almost all sexual activity between UN peacekeeping personnel and local women in order to prevent "sexual exploitation." The policy not only prohibits any "exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex" but also "strongly discourages sexual relationships between UN staff and beneficiaries of assistance since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics." See United Nations General Assembly, "A Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations," March 24, 2005, <https://edu.unlb.org/Portals/0/Documents/KeyDoc5.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> For more details, see United Nations General Assembly, "A Comprehensive Strategy." See Jenna Stern, *Reducing Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in UN Peacekeeping: Ten Years After the Zeid Report* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2015), for an assessment of the "Zeid Report" a decade in progress.

<sup>20</sup> See Muna Ndulo, "United Nations Responses to the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Women and Girls by Peacekeepers During Peacekeeping Missions," *The Berkeley Journal of International Law* 27 (2009): 127.

<sup>21</sup> See Corinna Csaky, *No One to Turn to: The Under-reporting of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Aid Workers and Peacekeepers* (London: Save the Children, 2008); and Kathleen Jennings, "Protecting Whom? Approaches to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peacekeeping Operations," Fafo Report, Oslo, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Note that the definition of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is broad, covering everything from sex trafficking, to rape, to sex work.

<sup>23</sup> Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

<sup>24</sup> Figure taken from Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, "Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Missions: The Role of Female Peacekeepers and Gender Equality in Contributing Countries," *Journal of Peace Research* 53 no. 1 (2016): 100-15.

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- <sup>25</sup> There is very limited evidence that increasing the proportion of female peacekeepers in missions explains the counts of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations. See Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping* and Karim and Beardsley, “Explaining Sexual Exploitation.”
- <sup>26</sup> Gender equality refers to when women and men and the different roles they play enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making. See European Institute for Gender Equality, “Concepts and Definitions,” accessed October 1, 2016, <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/concepts-and-definitions>.
- <sup>27</sup> See Annica Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense: Militarism and Peacekeeping* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- <sup>28</sup> Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (London: Virago, 1997), 103.
- <sup>29</sup> Military Leadership Diversity Commission, *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Military* (Arlington, VA: Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2011).
- <sup>30</sup> Medal parades are conducted when contingents leave a mission and are used to highlight the contingent’s contribution to the mission.
- <sup>31</sup> Survey conducted by Sabrina Karim for the UN Standing Police Capacity, UNPOL, at the International Association of Women Police, Barcelona, Spain, November 2016.
- <sup>32</sup> See Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*, 2017.
- <sup>33</sup> Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict*, 142.
- <sup>34</sup> Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.
- <sup>35</sup> For training best practices, The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations serves as a useful model.
- <sup>36</sup> Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict*, 149.
- <sup>37</sup> Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense*; And Robert Egnell, Petter Hojem, and Hannes Berts, *Gender, Military Effectiveness, and Organizational Change: The Swedish Model* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
- <sup>38</sup> Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense*, 83.
- <sup>39</sup> Robert J. MacCoun, Elizabeth Kier, and Aaron Belkin, “Does Social Cohesion Determine Motivation in Combat? An Old Question with an Old Answer,” *Armed Forces & Society* 32 no. 4 (2006): 646–54. See also Anthony King, *The Combat Soldier: Infantry Tactics and Cohesion in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- <sup>40</sup> Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.
- <sup>41</sup> Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict*, 149.
- <sup>42</sup> Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.
- <sup>43</sup> There is a long history of debate based on this trade-off. See Helena Carreiras, *Gender and the Military: Women in the Armed Forces of Western Democracies* (London: Routledge, 2006), 86-96.
- <sup>44</sup> See Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense*.