

# The Changing Role of Women in Stability Operations

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**Abstract-** Conflict occurs globally everyday impacting lives, countries, and slowing economic productive growth and safe wellbeing. In 1945, the United Nations founded an international organization comprised of nations of the world with the purpose to promote peace, security, and economic development. Since WWII, women's roles within the U.S. and world society have transformed. This paper will examine women's roles in logistics support for peace keeping missions, the possible barriers women encounter, as well as identifying current practices that hinder and/or promote the pool of female candidates.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The first documented female soldier was Deborah Sampson of Massachusetts during the Revolutionary War (N.Y. Times, 1898). Although Deborah enlisted as a man and changed her name, she was on a mission. Conflict continues to globally impacting lives, and countries. Conflicts slow economic productive growth, public safety, and wellbeing. Women make up a large portion of the population and want to help in the mission. There were approximately 35,000 American women who served during World War II. In 1945, the United Nations founded an international organization comprised of nations of the world with the purpose to promote peace, security, and economic development. The phases of peacekeeping operations include: Standby; Warning; Mounting; Deployment; Sustainment; and Redeployment. Anywhere in the six distinct phases each with their separate logistic support requirements, there is a need for both men and women. Although women have been active in many facets of field operations, the road to fully participate in the logistic support for field operations in the peace keeping missions has been a long and winding road.

## II. INTEGRATING WOMEN INTO THE PLAN

Since the inception of the United Nations, there have been issues about women and about the equality between women and men in the operation. The primary task of the Charter of the United Nations is to protect the rights and freedoms of every human being regardless of race, sex, language, or religion. The Preamble to the Charter affirms the equal rights of men and women as well as faith in fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of the human person.

During 1961-1970 this was known as the Development Decade for the United Nations. It was during this time that the status of women was not a major topic of concern (1999 UN Report). "Although the General Assembly mandated the Commission on the Status of Women in 1962 to prepare a report on women's role in development, the focus of the Commission was mainly on the humanitarian aspects of development and on women's legal rights, rather than the multifaceted aspects of women and development" (1999 UN Report, para. 11).

In the following decade (1971-1980), attention to the role of women intensified. The General Assembly included the integration of women as an objective in its International Development Strategy. Some researchers and practitioners made it a central topic of debate on development, especially after the publication of Ester Boserup's pioneering book, *Women's Role in Economic Development*. Women's roles in the stability operations literally became a field of study, advocacy, and somewhat of a practice in its own right throughout the 1970's.

At the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the focal point became the transforming of the initiatives in order to achieve gender equality. Rather than equality in access to resources, the politics of gender relations and restructuring of institutions was the goal for program development. [Note: For a more elaborate discussion of the conceptual shifts in the women-and-development discourse, and the alternative categorization of the two approaches, see Moser (1993) and Razavi and Miller (1995).]

The 1990's brought yet another shift. There was a political rather than economic aspects of development became the focus of concern for the gender and development arena. Now women were to take the initiative as equal partners in a participatory and "bottom-up" process of development. In this approach, "Empowerment cannot be given, it must be self-generated. All that a gender-transformative policy can hope to do is to provide women with enabling resources which will allow them to take greater control of their own lives, to determine what kinds of gender relations they would want to live within, and to devise the strategies and alliances to help them get there" (Kabeer, 1995, p. 97). So the idea was that transformative change presupposes the empowerment of women (1999 U.N. General Assembly).

## III. RESOLUTION 1325

The decade leading up to the adoption of Resolution 1325 saw the passing of many broad-based thematic resolutions which addressed general issues related to international peace and security. The resolutions on thematic issues of peace and security were known as 'TIPS'. TIPS included resolutions based on a role for various entities or individuals outside the UN's state-based system, such as parties involved in armed conflict, negotiators of peace agreements, etc. Resolution 1325 is a TIPS resolution that calls upon various parties, including Member States, the Secretary-General, the Council and parties to armed conflict as applicable, to

1. Gender mainstream UN peacekeeping operations;
2. Increase women's representation and participation in decision-making processes before, during, and after conflict; and
3. Consider women's specific needs in conflict and post-conflict operations, including by harmonizing national laws with international human rights standards.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, part of the United Nations office was proud to announce:

On 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Resolution 1325 marks the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women, recognized the under-valued and under-utilized contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building, and stressed the importance of their equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security.

Resolution 1325's adoption was a culmination of many years of efforts towards integrating women's issues into peace building and conflict studies and all dimensions of the work of the United Nations.

In the year following the endorsement of Resolution 1325, the 2001 statistics for military women serving in the armed forces of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries indicated an average of 5.5%. Since then, the numbers have increased; however, not at a rate that will meet the efforts that are outlined by the organization. The organization is striving for the 50/50 balance by the year 2015.

#### IV. CURRENT EFFORTS OF WOMEN IN STABILITY OPERATIONS

In March of 2008 a conference was held in Kigali. Discussions were focused on how to increase women's participation in peacekeeping missions, and how these missions can work to prevent and respond rapidly to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The conference falls under a wider program, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), to strengthen the work of the Rwanda Defense Forces (RDF) in combating SGBV, with particular focus on building the capacities of the Gender Based Violence Desk at Ministry of Defense headquarters and at decentralized levels.

Since its launch in September 2007, the program has trained 2,594 officers and cadets at the training academy, including 573 RDF officers preparing for peacekeeping missions, ex-combatants, local defense forces, and opinion leaders on the prevention and response to SGBV.

It was noted during the conference that "Women can improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations for the simple reason that they are not men" also according to Professor Gerard DeGroot of St. Andrew's University, Scotland, research has shown that women exhibit unique levels of self-control in violent situations that have important applications to peacekeeping.

In November 2006, 75 experts gather in New York and Washington to discuss "United Nations Reform: Improving Peace Operations by Advancing the Role of Women." This was convened by the Stanley Foundation and Women in International Security, practitioners and policymakers from various United Nations agencies, national governments and militaries, academia, and civil society groups identified barriers to women's advancement and generated concrete ways to improve the recruitment and selection of women for peace operations as

heads of mission, military personnel, civilian police, and international and national staff.

It was noted that to respond appropriately to the growing need for stabilization operations, experts at the meetings recognized the need to draw upon a wide variety of personnel with diverse skills and expertise, including women, who can provide critical leadership in peace operations and post-conflict reconstruction.

In late 2006, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) disseminated a policy directive on Gender Equality in UN Peacekeeping Operations that reiterates the necessity of increasing women's civilian and military roles in field missions. The DPKO also released a Global Action Plan on 1325 that includes the increased participation of women in peacekeeping as a priority for the agency. At the same time, UN member states are developing national action plans for the implementation of Resolution 1325, which include increased recruitment of women for peace operations.

At the meetings experts convened in working groups to discuss the recruitment and retention of women in five categories of peacekeeping personnel: heads of mission, military personnel, civilian police, international civilian staff, and national civilian staff. Participants outlined the process for hiring personnel, the challenges and opportunities to promote women, and practical recommendations for various actors in the five categories.

#### V. CHALLENGES/BARRIERS FOR WOMEN

Critics have pointed out the slow and ad hoc nature of these efforts. Despite repeated mandates and policy commitments—and these initial actions just described—little progress has been made to actually increase the number of women in peace operations. Statistics illustrate the implementation gap:

- There are zero female heads of mission (out of 18 operations) and only one woman deputy (Afghanistan).
- Only 1 percent of military personnel are women (of 70,960 total troops).
- Just 4 percent of police forces are women (of 8,482 total police).
- Approximately 30 percent of international civilian staff are women (of 4,568 total)—a number that decreases to 10 percent in management positions at the D-1 level or above.
- Women make up 22 percent of nationally recruited civilian staff (of 8,657 total), but many are relegated to service and clerical posts at the lowest grades.

Other challenges to women's recruitment and appointment include:

- An opaque hiring process without a formal job description.
- Infrequent support by member states for women candidates, in part because they are required for national positions.

- A lack of political will to appoint women from existing rosters of candidates despite the mandate for gender balance in leadership.
- A variety of competing opportunities for women with such experience.
- A reluctance by some women to accept an appointment in war-torn countries with shifting time commitments as result of family concerns or obligations.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aside from the challenges, it is clear that there is little advancement within the international peacekeeping environment to actively recruit women. It is evident, that there is a positive experience by utilizing women's participation, which can further enhance the various peacekeeping operations. In order to meet the 50-50 gender balance by 2015 strategies outlined in 2000 and each year thereafter should be followed.

*"It is my hope that the Security Council, Member States, the United Nations system, the NGOs, civil society and others will take further decisive action to ensure the participation of women and girls and fully incorporate their concerns into all our efforts to promote peace and security." (S/2002/1/1154 dated 16 Oct 2002)*

**The following recommendations are from a presentation to the Committee on Women in NATO, presented by Colonel Leijenaar on 23 May 2000 at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels :**

The Committee on Women in the NATO Forces (CWINF) is the most powerful body of women in uniform. It should make itself known to the UN DPKO decision makers and get involved in UN PKOs at top levels. Some suggestions are:

- Establish contact with Military Advisers to the respective countries'  
Permanent Missions to the UN in New York.
- Identify posts and suitable women candidates for UN PK Missions.
- Participate in the development of gender training programmes. (The UN DPKO Training Unit for UN PK training in this regard will use Canada and UK's effort).
- Identify suitable female candidates to succeed the current NATO liaison officer who serves on DPKO's staff.
- Identify funds and suitable candidates for the approved senior gender analysis post at DPKO.

The UN might be the mirror image of its MS, but it also has the responsibility to set an example to the international community it serves. The UN must encourage the following:

- Political will and awareness has to be developed among top management to promote gender mainstreaming.

- Competent women have to be included at the most senior levels of peace negotiations.
- Peace Agreements and Accords shall include gender perspectives.
- UN PK Mission mandates explicitly address gender equality.
- The UN has to develop an aggressive policy to identify and recruit senior women for top appointments, especially for UN PK Missions.
- All UN PK Mission planning processes should include relevant gender issues.
- Gender mainstreaming in UN PK Missions must be institutionalised with the overall responsibility placed with the SRSB.
- The DPKO must ensure that all MS military environments have clarity regarding the UN's gender perspectives.
- The DPKO Training Unit must ensure that all training material includes gender awareness training.
- Monitor and evaluation frameworks for Missions have to include gender perspectives as an integral part.
- Accountability mechanisms have to ensure that all personnel take responsibility for gender mainstreaming as relevant to their particular work.
- Gender Units should be established in all major UN PK Missions.
- The UN should be cautious not to just "add numbers" to improve gender equality.
- Gender sensitivity training should be continued in UN Departments and PK Missions.
- Coordinate and compose gender policies with UN PK to learn from the experience of other countries in integrating women in militaries.

General recommendations:

- More research, such as currently undertaken by DPKO's Lessons Learned Unit [LLU], regarding the involvement of military women in PKOs should be initiated.
- The issue of military women and mentorship should be developed.
- Military women should create viable networks.
- Women must involve men in all their activities to promote gender equality and "buy in".

*"If we accept that in any society, gender equality is more than a goal in itself; if we believe that the empowerment of women is a vital means to meeting the challenge of sustainable development; if we argue that the participation of women is a requirement in building good governance; if we insist that the rights of women are a precondition for the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance; if we are convinced of all these things in relation to all the societies we are trying to help in this world - then how can we fail to apply this conviction to our own society in our own house?" (Kofi Annan 1998)*

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