

FORUM:	Special Conference
ISSUE:	Declining the Financial and Sexual Exploitation Committed by UN Peacekeepers
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Introduction

Commonly referred to as the greatest stain in UN history, is the increasing number of horrific crimes of sexual abuse perpetrators which are not terrorists or militias. Instead, they are UN peacekeepers. They have taken advantage of conflict zones and exploited vulnerable civilians, engaging in sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). It is alarming that the blue helmets, seen as symbols of peace are now seen as a dominating source of insecurity for those that should be protected. Through the statistical analysis, it is evident that SEA is a constant problem within UN peacekeeping, with an average of 50 cases a year since 2010. This is extremely alarming, as only a fraction of cases is reported, due to the victims' fear of retribution, causing them to feel uncomfortable and scared to seek redress.

Background

Throughout the past few decades, a visible shift from inter- to intrastate conflicts has taken place. This shift has caused the civilians to be primary victims of the conflicts and the emergence of the non-conventional tactics of war. These methods



include sexual violence, such as systematic rape, which is increasing insecurity among civilians in nations. When accounts began to surface in 2004 of sexual misconduct by UN peacekeepers in DRC, the peacekeeping department requested investigations by the UN's Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). Investigators have been sent to varying countries to examine these allegations, which has resulted in dozens of expulsions and some criminal prosecutions by perpetrators' home governments.

Problems Raised

Crime

Varying allegations have centered on uniformed members of the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo stationed in the eastern town of Bunia, who have been accused of soliciting prostitution and exchanging money and food for sex with refugees – some as young as 12. This has caused an immense increase in crime, as rebelling groups of civilians are fighting for the rewards, in order to survive. This increase in crime leads to an overall increase in insecurity among civilians throughout all affected nations

Psychological Trauma (PTSD)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a problem that often occurs among many victims of abuse, predominantly among youth and adolescent. This mental condition causes for shock, fear, denial, confusion and grief to occur, allowing individuals to act, feel and think differently. Many of the affected civilians who have been sexually abused or exploited experience this problem. However due to a lack of facilities for counselling, rehabilitation and medical care, they remain untreated and end up suffering from many of the afore mentioned consequences for the rest of their lives.



United Nations' involvement in D.R.C

International Actions

MONUC – collaboration between the DRC and the UN

The MONUC operation has enforced certain actions across the UN peacekeeping zones, keeping all peacekeeping staff under control. These methods include the ban on all unofficial contact and fraternization by mission personnel with local communities. In addition to that, a dusk to dawn curfew of military personnel has been implemented, so that they do not leave during night time off hours.

Moreover, a common method is the prohibition of civilian dress for uniformed contingents to ease monitoring and identification of UN personnel. Further expanded training in UN codes of conduct and personnel rules regarding sexual abuse and exploitation is implemented in conflict zones with active UN peacekeeping members. In order to keep military personnel away from local civilians, there has been the designation of “off limits to UN personnel” areas, such as bars and brothels. However, to keep the



personnel busy, there have been improved amenities and recreational facilities on base. Finally, the creation of confidential “hotlines” has been created to report abuses.

UNICEF’s approach to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

New efforts have been called upon to end abuses committed by those serving under the UN peacekeeping force. This approach emphasizes a system-wide approach, focusing on putting victims first, ending impunity and raising awareness on the issue. This includes raising awareness on any allegations of sexual exploitation and strengthening and monitoring assistance support to victims, through ways such as medical care and psychological support. Furthermore, in 2017 there was the creation of an online training module for staff and consultants on preventing sexual exploitation, developed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women.

In addition to that, UNICEF has contracts with vendors to prohibit abuse by vendor personnel, as well as the requirement for candidates for employment as staff members to disclose investigation, with a proven allegation of sexual abuse will be grounds for disqualification. In conclusion, UNICEF is reviewing its capacity for investigations carefully, developing tools and training materials to safeguard interviews of child victims and witnesses.



UNFPA restoring health access for victims

Key Players

The Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been majorly affected by the abusive actions imposed by both warring factions as well as UN peacekeepers (MONUC). Therefore, as stated by Congo’s minister of family affairs and women Ms. Fabiola Faïda Mwangilwa, it is vital to assist all those in need. DRC’s government has done so by establishing a joint initiative with the UN to help victims of sexual exploitation. The initiative primarily focuses on medical care, counselling, relocation & reintegration as well as child welfare & education.

UNICEF

UNICEF has been the primary NGO to continuously support civilians that have been exploited by or are at risk of being harmed by UN peacekeepers. They believe that UN peacekeepers that are committing actions differing to expectations of their duties shall be penalized and punished accordingly. This can be seen through their courses of actions implemented to prevent further damage caused by UN peacekeeping members they have been segregated from locals in order to protect the civilians.



Medical care provided by UNICEF in D.R.C

Possible Solutions

Medical Care & Counselling

For the civilians that have previously been affected by the sexual abuse and exploitation committed by UN peacekeepers, often times, there is a lack of medical care, as well as counselling & rehabilitating options for them. Therefore, through funds and contributions made by nations such as MEDCs, a profound impact can be made in the lives of these civilian. Opportunities such as free or predominantly subsidized medical care can create a major difference in victims' lives, as they will be able to focus more of their rehabilitating phase and less on their financial burden. In addition to that, free counselling can help provide a safe space for the victims, where they feel comfortable to share their thoughts and receive guidance from professionals, whilst still finding themselves in a trustworthy and intimate environment.

Segregation between civilians and UN peacekeepers

Initiatives proposed by organizations such as the UN and DRC, allowing civilians to live in safety, away from the possible threat of abuse by UN peacekeepers is very effective, as this prohibition of contact immediately causes a smaller opportunity for harm and abuse. This can be done through ways such as setting a curfew for UN personnel, as well as designation of "UN personnel off limit" areas. Furthermore, the further increase with the national or local police reduces the informal contact between civilians and UN personnel. Finally, to isolate the UN personnel from outsiders, improvements for amenities and recreational facilities can be made, to keep them entertained on the camp grounds.

Glossary

Sexual exploitation



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Sexual abuse of children and youth through the exchange of sex or sexual acts for drugs, good, shelter, protection, other basics of life, and/or money

Systematic rape

Unlawful sexual activity carried out forcibly or under threat of injury against a person's will or with a person who is beneath a certain age or incapable of valid consent due to mental illness, mental deficiency, intoxication, unconsciousness or deception

Sexual abuse

undesired sexual behavior by one person upon another

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