Peacekeeper-Perpetrated Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Contextual Analysis of Risk and Protective Factors

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Our Collaborations
1. The Issue

Definitions Related to SEA

**Perpetrators:** UN staff /related personnel or non-United Nations forces acting under a Security Council mandate: peacekeepers (military, civilian, police), humanitarian responders etc.

**Sexual Abuse:** Physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force, under unequal, coercive conditions

**Sexual Exploitation:** Abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes
2. Our Research

- **Purpose:**
  - Understand the **different forms** of sexual interactions
  - Investigate **risk and protective factors**

Data collected in 2017

Data collected in 2018
**MONUSCO**: UN Stabilization Mission in DRC (1999-Present)
2. Our Research

Methods:

- **Cross-sectional** surveys with community members living in proximity to MINUSTAH and MONUSCO
  - N Haiti: 2451
  - N DRC: 2856

- In depth, **semi-structured qualitative** interviews
  - Haiti: 18 mother raising PKFC Haiti
  - DRC: 60 mothers raising PKFC and 35 children fathered by peacekeepers
Findings:

Typology of Sexual Interactions
3. Findings

**Typology of Interactions**

- Sexual abuse (Rape, sex with minors)

- Sexual exploitation (Survival sex, obligation sex, transactional sex, sex-work)
  - Power imbalance, e.g., exchange of humanitarian aid
  - Perceived as “helping” women/girls

- Longer-term relations, monogamous relationships, cohabitation, fake marriages
  - Peacekeepers fill the role of the masculine provider
  - Perceptions of love - Passage of time, abandonment, & increased perceptions of exploitation/abuse
Sexual Abuse

“One day, as I was getting food there, one of them called me, and I went to see him. There, he dragged me inside and forced himself on me. I ended up getting pregnant after that. I never told my mother about it.” (Haiti, Fort Liberte)

“That day I was on my way to school, a MONUSCO white guy came behind me, caught me tightly and raped me. I was 13 at that time. I cried and cried, but nobody came to help me. Later I found myself pregnant. I went on suffering up to delivery time … The baby grew up to 12, I was always unemployed. My child is suffering too much, for he has no support.” (DRC, Bunia)
Sexual Exploitation

“He always used to come to my house. He would *bring me things*, like when they have things inside [his base] like milk, and things he would bring me some…Some men won’t give you things if you don’t sleep with them.” (Haiti, Port Salut).

“It was poverty. *I didn’t know what to do to have money, so I had recourse with workers of Monusco* in order to get money, even 100 francs for food. At that time, I was between 16 and 17 years old. *I was not forced; I wanted to get money from him, 100 Francs that helped me.* (DRC, Goma)
Longer term relationships / Romantic notions

“I only had relations with him…I got pregnant after we were already together for 4 years because he did many missions…I know he is the father, because I spent 4 years [with him] and I wasn’t with anyone else.” (Haiti, Port Salut)

I fell in love with a MONUSCO agent from Tanzania … When he was about to go, I discovered that I was pregnant, I told him that I wanted to abort, but he refused and promised to avail everything I would need. He did so until my peacelbby was 1 week old. Then he went to his country and never sent me anything. (DRC, Beni)
Findings:

Risk and Protective Factors

*Relative to the presence of a peacekeeper who commits SEA*
Risk Factors

National & regional

- Economic hardship & poverty
- Normalization of sexualized violence
  - Legacy of conflict
Risk Factors

Ideological

- Transactional sex romanticization
  - Post-colonial settings
Risk Factors

Peacekeeping related

- Proximity to UN bases
  - Homes and shelter
- Unsupervised points of contact with peacekeepers
  - Informal and formal employment
  - Aid provision
Risk Factors

Individual & interpersonal

- Adolescents
- Family units
  - Internal displacement & camps
  - Parental mortality
Protective Factors

Access to sexual/reproductive health
- Not a form of primary prevention
- Can prevent further harm (pregnancy, STI, coercion)
Protective Factors

Streamlined reporting with timely accountability
- Interim disciplinary measures
Protective Factors

Planning of aid distribution

• Open, safe setting
• Monitoring
• Information that aid is free, content of aid & timing
Protective Factors

**Employment and income** not directly dependent on peacekeeping economies
Summary Points

- Various forms of sexual interactions are captured under SEA
  - This **complexity** must be addressed in prevention & response

- Prevention and response should integrate **multi-level** risk & protective factors
  - Combining **individual** & **structural**
  - Continued advocacy efforts to **end impunity**
To learn more ...
Read our other publications, connect on Twitter, explore the research website
Additional Slides on UN prevention & response system
Prevention

- Screening
  - Individuals who are known to have committed SEA within the UN missions will not be re-deployed

- Training
  - Pre-deployment, in-mission and ongoing
Prevention

- Outreach and Awareness Raising
  - Community focused sensitization on what SEA is and is not, how to report

Risk Assessment

   Environmental and social risks for SEA
Response

- SEA allegations can be made through multiple avenues: reporting at UN base, complaint box, reporting to other UN personnel, reporting to community based network

- Support - Investigation- Follow-up and Accountability
1. The Issue

Magnitude of *Reported* SEA

**UN staff members/related personnel:**
- 553 allegations involving 655 victims and 574 perpetrators (2017-2022)
  - Most common category (47%)
    - Sexual exploitation, exploitative relationship, transactional sex
1. The Issue

Magnitude of *Reported* Peacekeeper SEA

SEA Allegations UN Peacekeepers (Civilian, Military, Police):

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1. The Issue

Magnitude of *Reported* Peacekeeper Fathered Children (PKFC)

Paternity Claims UN Peacekeepers (Civilian, Military, Police):

- Conduct in UN Field Missions
Operationalization of Consent or Lack Thereof

Expectations
- Upward socio-economic mobility
- Support
- Sexual intercourse without conception

Promises
- Financial support
- Immigration
- Marriage

Unwritten rules
- Consent assumed when accepting the transactional exchange
Operationalization of consent

Promises he made to me before he left, he said that once he got back home, he would work to send for me to come live with him where he is. He said he would send money for me to gather the necessary things for me and for the child. He said he would get me a house, he would marry me (Port Salut 2)
Challenges with SEA response

Findings show:
- Lack of investigation following reports
- Lack of long term support to victims & resultant children
- Lack of communication and follow-up
- Unknown outcomes