



SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

This report examines the role of conflict management training in preparing peacekeepers for United Nations/African Union missions through an assessment of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Conflict Management Training for Peacekeepers program. The assessment relies on data collected through 137 semistructured interviews with returned peacekeepers trained by USIP, with community members in mission areas where peacekeepers were deployed, and with pre-deployment trainers. The report discusses findings, and offers recommendations for USIP's training for peacekeepers as well as for broader peacekeeping policy and practice.

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Conflict Management Training for Peacekeepers Assessment and Recommendations

Summary

- USIP's Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding has conducted conflict management training for peacekeepers since 2008. In 2014 the Academy began an assessment of this training to determine its relevance and effectiveness.
- The assessment reveals that USIP's training on communication, negotiation, and mediation is relevant to the needs of peacekeepers and helps them defuse conflicts in mission. In dealings with the civilian population, peacekeepers recognize the intersection between communication, respect, and cultural understanding.
- Peacekeepers see negotiation skills as key to effective peacekeeping. They use these skills in a range of contexts, including with the local population, with parties to the conflict, and within their battalion; and they often continue to use negotiation skills in personal and professional contexts when they return home.
- Community members seek a better understanding of peacekeepers' mission and more constructive engagement with peacekeepers.
- To engage with communities, peacekeepers must develop a mindset that is conducive to problem solving, as well as relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes, during their pre-deployment training.
- Peacekeepers' performance in protecting civilians is inconsistent.
- The UN's ambiguous language around sexual exploitation and abuse creates confusion for peacekeepers and poses challenges to compliance.
- Peacekeepers benefit from the practical exercises, role plays, and simulations included in their training, which give them plenty of opportunity to apply skills. In general, a participant-centered approach whose focus is not primarily military adds value to pre-deployment training.

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Introduction: The Policy Landscape

In 2014, then UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon appointed a High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) to assess the current state of peace operations and determine needs for the future. This assessment is one of many steps the United Nations has taken since 2000 to reform peacekeeping. The HIPPO report, which was issued in 2015, recognizes the changing nature of conflict—“in the absence of a peace to keep, peacekeepers are increasingly asked to manage conflict”—and asserts that “a rethink of capabilities and concepts is needed, to support these conflict management missions.”¹ This recommendation is supported by research on training for peacekeepers, which indicates that skills such as communication, negotiation, and mediation are critical to meeting the operational demands of modern peacekeeping missions.²

Just a few months after the release of the HIPPO report, President Barack Obama issued a new presidential policy on US support to UN peace operations. According to the memorandum, the United States needs to build partner capacity, expand contributions, and drive reform. More specifically, the memorandum notes the US commitment to enhancing capacity of partners by “increasing support for the UN’s conflict prevention and resolution efforts and capacity-building activities.”³

Among the four essential shifts called for in the HIPPO report is the need for UN peace operations to be more people-centered. The report notes an increasing gap between “what is being asked of peace operations and what they are able to deliver.”⁴ To address this gap, the report recommends increased efforts by peacekeepers to “engage with, serve and protect the people they have been mandated to assist.”⁵

Following the release of the HIPPO report, stories began to surface of peacekeepers sexually assaulting civilians in South Sudan and refusing to protect civilians in the Central African Republic. Sexual assault, accountability, and whistle-blower protection were quickly included in discussions about UN reform. United States Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley has addressed these topics and has expressed skepticism about the UN’s effectiveness. However, she has also firmly articulated her belief that the United Nations is an important institution that can be fixed. In February 2017, Secretary General Antonio Guterres announced an internal review of the UN peace and security strategy, with recommendations to be submitted in June 2017.

The HIPPO report identifies an issue that has been recognized for decades: training for peacekeeping heavily privileges traditional military skills and roles, leaving peacekeepers unprepared for their role as a third-party intervenor.⁶ The complex nature of peace operations requires the development of an equally complex set of skills. According to Diehl and Balas, the skills essential to micro-level operations are “interpersonal and intergroup relations, communication, and negotiation.”⁷

Regardless of how conflict management skills are framed, there is still the question of how best to train peacekeepers to ensure they can operationalize these skills. To shed some light on this question, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) conducted an assessment of its Conflict Management Training for Peacekeepers program (CMTP). This report highlights the findings of the assessment, which explores both the relevance and effectiveness of pre-deployment training for conflict management. The goal is to determine what is working, what is not working, and how conflict management training can fill some of the gaps outlined in the policy conversation.

From Policy to Practice: Conflict Resolution Training for Peacekeepers

In 2007, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Integrated Training Service was established as the center responsible for peacekeeping training. In 2008, a survey conducted as part of a DPKO-led Strategic Training Needs Assessment found that 37.2 percent of military respondents identified communication and negotiation as topics relevant to their work and placed these skills among the top five most relevant topics.⁸ In the same assessment, peacekeeping training institutions identified cross-cultural communication skills and negotiation skills as top training priorities. A DPKO Training Needs Assessment conducted in 2012–13 found that military and police personnel identified negotiation and the ability to build relationships with local leaders as additional pre-deployment training needs. Recommendations to improve pre-deployment training material included efforts in several subject areas tied to conflict management: communicating effectively with colleagues and external stakeholders; cultural diversity and working with multicultural teams; and negotiation and decision-making.⁹ In short, conflict resolution skills remain a recognized need for peacekeepers.

Much has been written both about the intersections between conflict resolution theory and peacekeeping, and about the need for peacekeepers to understand negotiation as an approach to address conflict at the micro and macro levels.¹⁰ In 2003, Wall and Druckman interviewed peacekeepers who had returned from deployment in Bosnia and asked them to recount a situation in which they mediated a dispute. Their responses reveal a high number of incidents involving mediation skills, including negotiation, active listening, and de-escalation.¹¹

The key guidance for peacekeeping training is contained within the Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials (CPTMs), created by the Integrated Training Service in 2009 and updated in 2014. The CPTMs are intended to provide the necessary knowledge required of all peacekeepers. Notably, the guidance in the CPTMs does not include information on communication and negotiation; Curran notes, however, that the materials approach cross-cultural communication in ways that can set the stage for negotiations.¹² USIP's assessment of the CPTMs conflict management training can inform future guidance on both the content and delivery of these critical peacekeeping skills.

USIP and ACOTA

Historically, the United States has supported UN peacekeeping missions as a key element in addressing regional crises and helping states emerge from conflict. The Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) Program is a Department of State initiative designed to enhance the capacities and capabilities of African partner countries, regional institutions, and the continent's peacekeeping resources, so they can plan for, train, deploy, and sustain sufficient quantities of professionally competent peacekeepers with minimal non-African assistance.¹³

In 2007, following an ACOTA conference in which the Rwandan military requested training on negotiation, the Department of State asked USIP to pilot a training on communication and negotiation skills for peacekeepers. USIP piloted the training in Rwanda in February 2008. Since then, USIP has partnered with ACOTA to train peacekeepers in the core conflict management skills of conflict analysis, communication, negotiation, mediation, and protection of civilians.¹⁴ In 2016, the training was revised to include expanded content on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.

USIP delivers its trainings to troop-contributing countries (TCCs) prior to deployment on UN and/or AU missions, which have included Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Côte

d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Darfur (UNAMID), the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), Lebanon (UNIFIL),¹⁵ Mali (MINUSMA), Somalia (AMISOM), and South Sudan (UNMISS). Participants in the trainings are military trainers and soldiers, including officers and noncommissioned officers, selected by the TCC. The vast majority are male. Trainings are conducted in the language of instruction used in the broader pre-deployment training, either French or English. When French-speaking trainers are not available, USIP uses a local interpreter.

In the nine years that USIP has partnered with ACOTA, the Academy has trained more than five thousand peacekeepers from twenty African TCCs.¹⁶ USIP has also delivered training-of-trainers for host-nation military trainers in Togo, Senegal, and Rwanda.

In 2014 the Academy began an internal, formative assessment of the training program to determine the relevance and effectiveness of USIP's CMTP and to provide recommendations that will improve the content and delivery of the training. The data from the assessment reveal that USIP's training on communication, negotiation, and mediation is relevant to the needs of peacekeepers and contributes to their ability to defuse conflicts. Peacekeepers use the skills learned in USIP's training during their deployments to prevent the escalation of conflict and to manage conflicts nonviolently. Numerous anecdotes show peacekeepers in mission using the skills learned in the training. The data illustrate a need among peacekeepers for further training in how to use nonviolent approaches to manage conflict while deployed. The findings shed light on how to improve the design and delivery of USIP's training so that peacekeepers are best able to use these critical skills in mission, and they suggest recommendations for broader peacekeeping policy and practice.

Assessment Methodology

The formative assessment of USIP's CMTP was designed (1) to assess the relevance and effectiveness of past USIP conflict management trainings for peacekeepers; and (2) to provide recommendations on how to improve the curriculum, training methods, and documentation of lessons learned. Some broader findings and recommendations for peacekeeping training also emerged from the assessment.

The assessment borrows from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's guidance on evaluating conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities, which focuses on areas of relevance, effectiveness, and impact.¹⁷ This assessment does not attempt to examine the impact of USIP's training but concentrates on relevance and effectiveness, as defined in the following questions:

- *Relevance.* To what extent does the training provide peacekeepers with relevant knowledge and skills that have job applicability consistent with the mandated requirements of each peacekeeping mission?
- *Effectiveness.* To what extent does the training address the knowledge and skills needed by peacekeepers on issues of negotiation, communication, conflict resolution, and protection of civilians? To what extent do peacekeepers use the knowledge and skills of the training when deployed?

To conduct the assessment, the assessment team applied a user-centered approach and contribution analysis. The goal was to capture both existing evidence of contribution and the experience of individual peacekeepers and community members in order to gain a better understanding of how USIP trainings have been implemented. The discussion below describes the important aspects of the methodology.

User-centered approach. The individual peacekeeper is the direct beneficiary of USIP's trainings. A user-centered approach recognizes the importance of peacekeepers in the capacity-development process taking place during the training. To frame the data analysis,

the assessment draws upon the Kirkpatrick model of evaluating the effectiveness of training, which analyzes the value of a training across four levels: (1) participant's reaction to the curriculum and the methodology; (2) the learning that occurred; (3) the change in behavior; and (4) the results.¹⁸ Kirkpatrick's approach is particularly well suited for this formative assessment, in which feedback from key stakeholders is used to improve the curriculum and its implementation and to enhance the training's effectiveness and relevance for peacekeepers and the communities they serve. USIP's use of the Kirkpatrick model is consistent with DPKO Integrated Training Service's approach to evaluation. DPKO combines the Kirkpatrick model with a return-on-investment model, resulting in a five-level approach: reaction, learning, application, business impact, and return on investment. The assessment team's insights touch on the areas of reaction, learning, and behavior/application.

Contribution analysis. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the assessment looks for any evidence that USIP's training contributed to the learning and performance of peacekeepers; it also looks for any other factors that may have improved or stymied peacekeepers' learning and performance. The assessment does not aim to prove direct causality as it relates to effectiveness; the challenges of trying to prove causality in complex peace operations, with myriad factors at play, are too great. Consider that USIP's training is part of a broader pre-deployment program of instruction offered to peacekeepers through the ACOTA program for a period of eight to twelve weeks, and that peacekeepers often receive additional pre-deployment, induction, and/or ongoing training from the United Nations, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and France, among others. Because of the difficulty in making causal linkages, the team determined that contribution analysis would be more appropriate than attribution.

"End beneficiary" voice. The team interviewed members of communities where peacekeepers were deployed to get a sense of how they perceived peacekeeper performance. This inclusion of community member voices adds to the user-centered approach by bringing in the perspective of the ultimate beneficiary of conflict management training—the civilians being protected. It is important to note, however, that the data from the community member interviews do not allow the team to fully triangulate data: those interviewed cannot always recall the specific country a peacekeeper is from (e.g., Benin versus Togo), and the team cannot always determine that the peacekeepers with whom community members interacted are those who participated in USIP's training. However, there are instances in which community members and peacekeepers talk about the same incidents, providing critical cross-references. The community members' perspective on peacekeeper performance more generally provides critical insight into the nature of peacekeeper-community relationships in mission areas. For the most part, quotes from community members are relevant for this latter category, providing a general understanding of dynamics.

Data collection. To gather data, the assessment team first conducted a desk review of program documents, including posttraining assessment surveys (described below). The assessment team also conducted individual and group interviews with fifty-six peacekeepers from six TCCs—including Benin (fourteen), Burundi (six), Rwanda (three), Tanzania (two), Uganda (three), and Togo (twenty-eight)—deployed to six mission areas.¹⁹ The team identified TCCs for the assessment based on the number of trainings conducted and peacekeepers trained. The six TCCs represented in the assessment account for 68 percent of the more than five thousand peacekeepers trained by USIP and include six of the seven TCCs with the highest number of peacekeepers trained by USIP. The process of interviewing peacekeepers was hampered along the way by institutional barriers and procedures. The clearance process by TCCs authorizing the assessment team to interview returning peacekeepers was lengthy, and militaries exercised varying levels of oversight of the interview process, depending on their

comfort or discomfort with an assessment led by non-TCC military actors.

Additionally, sixty-five community members were interviewed in one-on-one and group settings in four mission areas, including Côte d'Ivoire (twenty-five), focusing on Abidjan and including the communes of Yopougon and Abobo; and Democratic Republic of Congo (fifteen), in Lubumbashi and Kanima in the former Katanga Province. The team chose these particular locations to take advantage of the possibility that community members might recognize peacekeepers, or at least their country of origin; this was an attempt to triangulate the data by getting a diverse group of stakeholders (peacekeepers and community members) to describe the same situations and environment. Interviews were also conducted with community members in Mogadishu, Somalia (twenty), and via Skype with community members in Darfur, Sudan (five). Ten USIP trainers who have led multiple Conflict Management Trainings for Peacekeepers were also interviewed along with six ACOTA country managers and senior staff working in four TCCs.

Identifying peacekeepers who had attended USIP's training proved difficult, in part due to a lack of contact information. Most of the peacekeepers were scattered across different military bases in their home country or had been redeployed. To overcome this challenge, the assessment team used a snowball sampling strategy. The team presented all available lists of past participants from USIP trainings to TCC militaries, who identified peacekeepers for initial interviews. USIP then worked with this first group of peacekeepers to identify other respondents.

Interviewers conducted semistructured interviews based on guiding questions. The nature of the interviews (one-on-one versus group) was determined by TCC militaries based on time and space constraints. All interviews were conducted in person, with the exception of interviews with community members in Darfur. Those interviews were conducted over Skype, as the interviewer was not able to obtain a visa to Darfur. When the interviewer and interviewee(s) spoke different languages, the interviewer engaged an interpreter.

Data analysis. The assessment team used a qualitative approach and a collaborative process to analyze the interviews. The team first read three transcripts from each stakeholder group, looking for initial themes and individual codes. The team then met to discuss these initial themes and looked at selections of data to illustrate how the team members coded. A list of codes was then generated, tested, and revised further. The team individually hand-coded all 137 interviews and entered codes into the qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) to assist with data analysis. Codes were grouped together as findings and subfindings. The team opted for an iterative, qualitative approach that privileges the voices of the interviewees and roots the findings in their lived experiences.

Findings

The key findings, summarized below, are drawn primarily from interviews with peacekeepers and community members. The interview data provide a rich sense of the peacekeeper experience in mission; they illuminate *what* peacekeepers have learned from USIP's training as well as *how* these lessons have influenced their behavior in mission.

Peacekeepers' Reactions

Peacekeepers' reactions to USIP's training are captured in surveys distributed at the end of every training. The posttraining questionnaires capture participants' sense of the overall usefulness of each session in the training, as well as participants' opinions of the content and methods of instruction. Overall, survey data reveal that peacekeepers have an overwhelmingly positive perception (9.55/10 rating, n = 1,854) of the training's usefulness in

preparing them for their peacekeeping mission.²⁰

Given these overwhelmingly positive results, there is some question about the reliability of the survey and the utility of survey responses for informing the improvement of training. During interviews, trainers noted that language and literacy levels, cultural differences and expectations, the sentiment of the senior ranking officer in the training, and even the survey format could affect survey results. None of these concerns has been confirmed as affecting results, but they should be considered in future survey design. It should also be noted that during face-to-face interviews, peacekeepers spoke positively about USIP's training, advocating for additional and longer training.

Peacekeepers' Learning and Behavior/Application

The assessment team identified eight key findings from the interviews (summarized below), each of which is broken down into several subfindings.

Finding 1: Peacekeepers identify effective communication, respect, and knowledge of the local culture as essential to mission success and at times talk about these notions as intertwined.

A significant amount of time is spent during both peacekeeper and community member interviews speaking about communication. Fifty-three of the fifty-six peacekeepers interviewed (95 percent) talk about using communication skills in mission. Conversations consistently turn to the benefits of and need for communication (peacekeeper interviews), as well as the desire for more communication (community member interviews). Peacekeepers talk extensively about the importance and application of communication skills during their deployments. Some peacekeepers link their sense of a successful mission to their interactions with civilians, and others talk about the importance of building trust and relationships through these interactions. Communication is also seen as a means of showing respect and cultural understanding. While peacekeepers speak of the importance of respecting local culture and ask for more training on culture, some community members express the feeling that their culture is disrespected.

Peacekeepers identify effective communication as critical to a successful mission.

Conversations with peacekeepers included questions about how they define a successful mission and what an effective peacekeeper looks like. Interviewers asked these questions to determine the extent to which nonviolent conflict management skills—the content of USIP's training—are identified as necessary for a successful mission and an effective peacekeeper. During these conversations, peacekeepers frequently mention communication as critical to mission success.

A Togolese peacekeeper deployed to Mali describes using communication skills to address the local population during a visit of Mali's prime minister to Kidal. In response to protests by the local population, the peacekeepers explained the purpose of the prime minister's visit: he was coming to listen to the people rather than to reject their demands, and to see how they could work together to solve their problems. The peacekeeper relates the experience in Mali to USIP's training: "I can say that the training that we have on negotiation and communication was very, very useful at Kidal because those people, if you don't know how to communicate with them, you will not be on good terms with them; you will not succeed [in] your mission."

Another Togolese peacekeeper speaks in detail about communication, using the specific language taught in USIP's training around active listening:

When you are in the field one thing that is very, very important is active listening, because if you don't listen to the person you're talking with, you might not succeed [in] your mission. You have to give the opportunity to the person to express herself; this

will allow you to know the intention, the ideas of the person. It helps you analyze the situation. And when you are giving the opportunity. . . to a person to express her mind, it will allow you to know the type of technique that you can use with the person for the negotiation. . . . The way you're going to approach someone to communicate can also affect the negotiation that you are going to have. If you don't use a good approach, even if it is just a minor situation, it can become a major one.

This peacekeeper speaks of communication as a precursor to negotiation, demonstrating an understanding of the training content that presents negotiation as part of the communication process, one that is facilitated when trust is built through active listening.

Peacekeepers use communication skills to establish trust and build relationships with civilians. Peacekeepers talk about using communication skills to establish trusting relationships. One peacekeeper notes that before going to a new area, peacekeepers must first talk to the local population and explain why they are there, what their role is, and how they can work together: “We have first to communicate with them; we had to explain. . . why it is important for them to accept us in their area.” He points to the benefits of communicating peacekeepers’ purpose when they first contact the population: “Usually they are very friendly because we respect them by coming to them to explain the mission, . . . and sometimes even when we finish the work and we go back, we have them in contact, they call us if there is anything. I will call them to [find out] how are things going in their areas.” The ways in which peacekeepers talk about communication and relationship building is consistent with how researchers Hansen, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse refer to it. They see communication as a consent-promoting technique that allows peacekeepers to counter “rumor, uncertainty, and prejudice, as well as to foster an atmosphere of trust and stability” that contributes to more positive perceptions of peacekeepers.²¹

Peacekeepers recognize that building and maintaining relationships with local communities over the long term may make their work easier. One Beninese MONUSCO captain reports using communication skills to build a relationship with a local religious leader and thus avoid the use of force.

They called me and told me that there were these auto-defense forces who were looting, making noise and all that. They told me that their leader had even come to my post at Moba. . . . I was obliged to get in touch with the religious leader who was there. . . . I had his number, I called him. I went to see him to tell him that there was such a situation and this person in his locality, that it was necessary that we discuss. He too started by giving conditions. Well, we could not do anything. We came to an understanding and he told me to come back. The next morning, the [person] concerned was there hidden in one of his rooms. While we were talking, the person came out and sat down. I did not know him. We discussed and got back to the topic. Since he knew that I was not aggressive and that I was approaching the problem for peace's sake and all that, he was obliged to bring out the concerned and together we discussed. He told me his reasons and at the end we became friends. When I see something that can reduce violence there, when I see something, I call him. . . . We became friends and this made my work very easy in my zone until I came back.

Part of building this relationship involved being able to explain effectively peacekeepers’ interest in maintaining peace. The commander notes that had he approached the situation militarily, the outcome would have been quite different: “It would [have] degenerate[d] to something else, and then they would say that I have a party which I am protecting. The USIP training enabled me to know how to approach different phases of situations which occur on the field at our level.” In many instances, peacekeepers cite communication as fundamental to their work and important to all aspects of their mission.

Respect and cultural understanding are critical to a successful mission. Communication is also a means to show respect for, and a cultural understanding of, the local population. Peacekeepers identify respect and cultural awareness as critical to mission success and regard both as essential qualities and skills that all individual peacekeepers must possess to be effective. In peacekeepers’ conversations, the concepts of cultural awareness and respect

are often combined. Asked about the qualities of an ideal peacekeeper, a peacekeeper from Rwanda replies: “Knowledge. Respect. To know the history. Must know the culture and language. Must understand the needs and wants of the community. He must know the area of operation—the historical background.” This formulation not only couples culture and respect, it adds two more dimensions: understanding historical context and understanding the needs and wants of the community.

A Togolese peacekeeper remarks that “when you are talking with someone and the person feels like you do not give him any respect, you don’t consider him like a human being, it is not good.” In reflecting back on his mission to Darfur, a Rwandan peacekeeper remarks, “We have to know the culture to be successful in our mission. When I don’t know the Misseriya culture, I don’t know how to approach them. I don’t know the customs or norms [of] how to interact respectfully.” For this peacekeeper, knowledge of the local population’s customs and norms is part of what enables him to be successful.

Cultural understanding also enables peacekeepers to meet their mission objectives: “As Rwandans, we have our own culture, there are others you try to interact with, but if you misunderstand each other, it is much harder to achieve your objective.” Another Rwandan peacekeeper deployed to Darfur shares a similar outlook: “We know our people, our culture. You get [to the] mission and you meet different kinds of people. You try to have good interactions. Obey other cultures, other norms, other values, other ethics.” This Rwandan peacekeeper hints at the notion that culture is mediated, suggesting an understanding that his interaction with others is filtered through his own Rwandan cultural identity. He recognizes that interactions are freighted with layers of culture that can potentially hinder productive interactions and create opportunities for misunderstandings.

Peacekeepers have a thin notion of culture and want more culture training. Peacekeepers talk about culture in different ways. Some demonstrate a thin notion of culture—that is, culture as language and dialect, gender, religion, and ethnicity. For many peacekeepers, culture is a characteristic that some people possess and others do not. Peacekeepers talk about cultural awareness in ways that suggest they see culture as simply shared innate characteristics. Presumably, if peacekeepers increase their knowledge and understanding of these innate characteristics, they will be more effective peacekeepers. When a Rwandan peacekeeper is asked what he would include when designing content on cultural awareness, he offers that he would include people’s dialects and different ethnic groups’ behavior. However, this understanding of culture as a set of characteristics is somewhat limited; it lacks the more robust notion that culture is understood through one’s own individual cultural lens.

For some contingents, culture training is prescriptive. They are told what to do and what not to do from a cultural perspective when engaging with civilians. But other peacekeepers desire additional culture training that attends to the specific cultural contexts where they deploy. One Togolese peacekeeper observes about his USIP training, “The Malians, they are Muslim. This is their culture but they didn’t talk about Kidal. When we were in Kidal those people are different. They act. As they’re talking, they will be acting [gesturing]. They are very difficult people. But [we] didn’t know that before going there.”

DPKO’s Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials emphasize cultural awareness in Unit 4 under “Respect for Diversity.” The section emphasizes understanding and respecting customs and norms, and focuses on distinctive features of cultures such as attitudes regarding authority and management; body language and gestures; religion; family and roles; dress code; and concepts of time.²² However, if peacekeepers look at these concepts in isolation or as discrete units, without understanding the intersections of various identities, they may misunderstand what they have been taught or overestimate its value. Regarding the cultural notion of time, for example, the DPKO materials rightly note that peacekeepers should not

“over generalize about any group’s ways of perceiving or managing time.”²³ This caution against overgeneralizing is critical and should be applied to all aspects of culture, as peacekeepers risk missing the essence of the individuals and communities with whom they engage when they rely on oversimplified generalizations learned before interacting with individuals.

There is a real desire on the part of peacekeepers to spend more time engaged in culture training. This desire indicates that peacekeepers understand the value of culture in carrying out their mandate to protect civilians. Future culture training should include framing that is more complex and in depth and moves beyond prescriptive and narrow notions of culture.

Community members place importance on respect and at times feel their culture is disrespected. While peacekeepers speak of the need to respect the culture of the local population, community members note that peacekeepers sometimes fall short. One Ivorian chief notes that peacekeepers in his community did not seem to respect his culture when he was mourning the loss of his sister. The chief felt disrespected by peacekeepers in his community because they did not follow the mourning practices of his community. In the chief’s view, the peacekeeper should have paid his respects with an offering that the chief could share with his community.

According to community members in Somalia, peacekeepers’ respect for the community varies widely. One Somali woman perceives disrespect in the way the AMISOM contingents drive in Mogadishu:

They drive fast and they don’t stop for anyone. They don’t respect any rules. So people when they see AMISOM vehicles coming, they clear the road and they say, “Oh, they’re coming!”... [Peacekeepers] say that because of the insecurity they cannot... drive slower. ... When there was a traffic light and everybody else stops, they just go, and that’s disrespectful. So I think they should drive slower and they should respect our culture.

Respect for the Somali people includes respect for Somali religious practices. When a Somali is praying, one community member explains, “you just don’t cross in front of them. . . You have to wait for them until they finish the prayer.” A Somali woman recounts her community’s experience during Eid, when peacekeepers seemed to show a lack of cultural sensitivity and disrespect for Somali religious customs:

In Somalia when people go to the Eid festivals, men wear the long shirt. . . You should respect them when they’re wearing that because it is a religious sign. . . They [peacekeepers] were searching over the body and they were searching in a very rude way. And everybody was saying, “We are not going to tolerate this. They can’t do this to our people, especially on Eid Festival!” . . . Those are the kinds of thing that they need to be careful with.

This perceived lack of respect during Eid led to a Facebook campaign against AMISOM that included photographs of the offending behaviors. For the Somali community, it is important that peacekeepers show particular care and sensitivity to their customs during religious holidays.

Not all peacekeepers are insensitive to Somali religious practices, however. A Somali community member notes that in his experience, peacekeepers do respect Somali culture. He describes an experience in which peacekeepers invited the community inside the camp to eat together: “Sometimes they call us when there is Eid. . . and we eat together. . . They slaughter some goats and we eat together and stay with them for Eid.”

The ways in which peacekeepers demonstrate cultural understanding when communicating with community members affects community members’ perception of peacekeepers—and their feelings toward the mission as a whole. Given the importance placed on the coupled notions of respect and culture, there is a need to look more closely from both a prescriptive and a competency-based perspective at how peacekeepers are prepared to think about culture.

Finding 2: Peacekeepers identify negotiation skills as key to effective peacekeeping.

Peacekeepers identify negotiation skills as critical to the success of both the overall mission and the specific operations of their deployment. However, conversations with peacekeepers reveal that negotiation skills are applied in various ways, which may result from individuals' understanding of the negotiation process or from the opportunities presented by their different ranks and responsibilities.

In talking about what it means to be a “good” peacekeeper and in defining a “good” peacekeeping mission, peacekeepers cite the importance of negotiation. A Togolese peacekeeper speaks of negotiation in terms of both mission and peacekeeper success:

I think our mission is more about negotiation. If you go to a mission, you are not going there to use force. . . . If there is any problem or conflict, the first thing that you have to do is use negotiation. . . . You have to be a good soldier by talking to the people, by trying to know the problem, by negotiating with them.

Statements like this suggest that peacekeepers both understand and talk about negotiation skills as part of the foundation of their peacekeeping work.

Peacekeepers understand and apply negotiation skills differently from one another.

Conversations with peacekeepers reveal varied interpretations of what it means to negotiate, and in what situations negotiation is appropriate. Some peacekeepers have a narrower interpretation of negotiation and associate it with formal processes, while others talk about applying negotiation skills in a range of settings, including within their command. Peacekeepers' rank and role may influence whether they will have opportunities to negotiate directly with local populations. According to some peacekeepers, those who are in charge of battalions or missions are more likely to negotiate with local populations than those of lower ranks. Some lower-rank peacekeepers may observe higher-ranking colleagues negotiating with local populations, though they may not be directly involved in the negotiations.

A Burundian peacekeeper notes that the officers who participate in USIP's conflict management trainings are not the peacekeepers who engage in high-level negotiations; that role is for mission leadership.

[When] there is high-level intervention, . . . we don't know if those high-ranking officials had gone through the same training. If it were a question of negotiation at the level of the battalion, there is no one who intervenes. . . . So we learned something but we do not have the opportunity now to put into practice what we learned.

He further clarifies the distinction he makes about who can negotiate and when: “The method we learned helps us especially if there is something which is not going right between the military and the civilians—one civilian or two, not a group. There we can intervene, but if it concerns a group, it is above us. It is already for the top officials to intervene.” In this case, the peacekeeper distinguishes between interpersonal conflict and intergroup conflict, noting that he is able to negotiate at an interpersonal level though not at an intergroup level.

Another Burundian AMISOM captain distinguishes similarly between different situations requiring negotiation, military-civilian on the one hand and between clans on the other:

When we went for cordon and search missions, sometimes we had to negotiate with the Somali people on issues that created problems between the military and the people, just as sometimes, not me personally, but my superiors, they tried to negotiate, to [promote] understanding between the Somali population in conflict, that is to say, conflicts between people of different clans.

Other peacekeepers interpret negotiation less formally and talk about using negotiation skills in a range of settings, including in their interactions with their command and beyond their peacekeeping mission. See the discussion of Finding 3 for more detail.

Researchers and practitioners focusing on conflict resolution training for peacekeepers also note these two spaces for negotiation: one at the macro level, where peacemaking or peacebuilding occurs, and the other at the micro level, where negotiation skills are used to address local crises.²⁴ Peacekeepers find themselves negotiating with little time for preparation; they must therefore understand negotiation undertaken to protect civilians as a starting point for the longer-term resolution of conflicts.²⁵ Hansen, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse also note the varied contexts for negotiations: “Negotiation and mediation are seen to be essential skills for all the different stages and levels of a [peace support operation]. They may involve service personnel, from senior commanders who meet with faction leaders to soldiers at isolated observation points who work to control an incident or even arbitrate a dispute.”²⁶

Interviews reveal how varied are peacekeepers’ understanding and application of negotiation—and this variety has implications for how USIP training frames and introduces what negotiation is, how it can be applied, and at what level of conflict.

Peacekeepers use conflict management skills to prevent or defuse potentially violent situations. Peacekeepers seem able to take the skills for managing conflict non-violently that they learn in training and apply them in mission. Peacekeepers describe situations in which they utilized the skills of nonviolent conflict management to prevent or defuse potentially violent situations during their missions. They frame nonviolent skills as a key and necessary approach to being successful in mission. They also talk about having had to negotiate and mediate with various groups to accomplish certain required tasks.

Many of the peacekeepers interviewed face potentially violent situations in their area of operation. Challenges include disarming rebel groups, encountering illegal roadblocks, or dealing with the tensions created by a general scarcity of resources. In some cases, peacekeepers use negotiation to address these obstacles.

A Tanzanian peacekeeper describes a situation involving disarmament in which two rebel groups approach the process differently:

Since I was the head of the operation, I came down from my vehicle, and I approached them in order to talk with the chief of the different groups who didn’t want to put down their weapons. As I said, some are for the disarmament and some are against... even between them or among them there’s a conflict. So I have to talk with the two groups in order to bring those who didn’t want to put down their weapons to accept why it is important for them to put down their weapons. So those who were against the operation, they said that they could not put down their weapons unless their boss or their chief gives them the instruction to do so, and [I] asked them who is their leader then and they give [me] the contact of someone. And [I] did call the person and talk with the person. It ended with him satisfied and me being satisfied... They won and we won, so we both won.

In this context, negotiation is spoken of as a process of communication that results in a win-win solution. The peacekeeper observes that in such a situation, it is important to “have some tact in order to attain one’s objectives.” How one communicates during a negotiation, as well as what one communicates, matters.

A Togolese peacekeeper describes the process by which he negotiated with the local population protesting the presence of the French army: “We use the simple way of negotiation. The way we talk with them, we thought that was good. When we took the demands and we give them to the representatives of the government, they were happy and they left the area.” A peacekeeper from Benin describes his relationship with the local chiefs in Côte d’Ivoire and how he negotiated with them to prevent tension: “Lower your tone so that the tension may not explode again... because they are people who... can easily shoot.” Here again, negotiation involves a way of communication that defuses rather than escalates tension.

Peacekeepers also use negotiation skills in their work to protect civilians. A Burundian peacekeeper in Somalia describes his unit's negotiation with the Red Cross to ensure that Al Shabaab members could not sneak explosives onto the base, which the peacekeepers and the Red Cross shared. The negotiation resulted in the Red Cross moving the entrance to its facility.

In these incidents, the peacekeepers use several concepts from USIP's training. They talk about tone of voice and *how* they communicate as well as *what* they communicate; they talk about trying to move past a stalemate by coming up with a solution that addresses the community's concerns; and they talk about relationships. In each of the incidents described, the peacekeepers are able to apply the skills of conflict management, allowing them to operate without the use of force. The examples given above illustrate a range of incidents involving different levels and numbers of actors with whom peacekeepers engage, as well as various contexts in which the skills of negotiation and mediation are useful.

Finding 3: Peacekeepers use conflict management skills beyond their engagement with communities to enhance their leadership skills and personal development.

When asked about specific contexts in which peacekeepers have used conflict management skills, several peacekeepers talk about using them to reduce tension among their soldiers and with other TCCs, and to manage conflicts when they returned home. These broader applications of conflict management skills illustrate a high level of engagement with and understanding of the content of USIP's training.

Effective communication strengthens peacekeepers' leadership within their command. When describing how they use communication and negotiation skills during their deployment, some peacekeepers talk about the relevance of these skills for managing their soldiers. A Beninese peacekeeper with AMISOM frames USIP's training as, in essence, leadership training: "All military leaders need [USIP training] because it boosts all leadership. And leadership is the manner of communication, and communication in this case is the first pawn in negotiation and mediation."

Peacekeepers describe using communication and negotiation skills to manage escalating emotions among their troops, due to time away from family, difficulties working with peacekeepers from other countries, or the challenges of the peacekeeping mission more generally. Hansen, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse cite the need for peacekeepers to use the skills of conflict resolution to communicate within multinational forces: peacekeepers "need to relate to each other within the force, just as they must become more conscious of the values of the communities in which they are placed."²⁷

A Togolese peacekeeper describes how he uses communication and negotiation with his men:

We happened to use them internally because there were moments of stress. I use them because sometimes we work under a lot of stress, and people...are far from their family, their wives, and they're very stressed for a year. So you have to know how to talk to them in order not to make them more angry and make the mission fail... You have to be aware of your actions and the way you talk to them.

A Beninese peacekeeper who is a doctor comments on the importance of applying conflict resolution internally in order to be able to work effectively in the community: "If we do not work together in good collaboration, if there is a conflict, if there is an emergency, this collaboration will still be lacking."

Another Beninese peacekeeper describes using communication and negotiation to manage his command and keep his troops disciplined. In his view, negotiation helps one to be a good leader:

You will always be rigorous, but at some point you have to be flexible, because you begin to understand what your soldiers feel. Because you as a human being, you feel the same way. It is sometimes necessary to be conciliatory. It does not mean we should not be rigorous; we should be rigorous but make a few concessions so that the elements feel that you feel the same as them. . . . Empathy. You. . . have to tell them that you feel the same as them. . . . We must unite them for the same cause. You have to find something to bring them together. So if you do not know how to manage them, the soldier at one point, when he loses it, he can even point the weapon at you.

As this account suggests, peacekeepers use communication and negotiation skills in multiple contexts and they see the relevance of these skills for leadership.

Conflict management training contributes to peacekeepers' personal development.

For many peacekeepers interviewed, the benefits of knowing how to manage conflict non-violently extend beyond peacekeeping, contributing to how they think about and approach conflict in their personal lives, as well as in their work lives at home. Negotiation is seen as central to the peacekeepers' mission, but for some, an understanding of negotiation has informed how they approach problem solving more generally.

A Togolese peacekeeper talks about a shift in perspective with regard to approaching conflict that occurs after taking USIP's training:

This course is not for the mission only. . . . [The course] will help you [see] the difference between what people are saying about a conflict and your appreciation after looking deeply into the problem. It will help you have a different appreciation of things because the aim is to have a result without violence. If you have that in your mind, that you have to solve a problem without violence, then it is necessary to come back to the training that we took.

Another Togolese peacekeeper describes negotiation as a part of culture:

What I like is the mechanism of negotiation. For me it was like a culture. . . . Apart from the use of this [USIP] training on the field, on the mission, is the culture. . . . It's something that I can use in my everyday life, . . . not in mission only.

Thus described, negotiation becomes a way of approaching the world, a disposition that is always present rather than a skill one uses in specific contexts.

A Burundian peacekeeper observes of negotiation: "It is in everyday life. Even in the neighborhood, there are people who quarrel. . . . You have to help in a peaceful manner. It is applied every day, it is not only in peacekeeping but. . . is an everyday thing even in our daily lives." Another Burundian peacekeeper implies that the disposition toward negotiation entails responsibility: "Even in daily life, we can use these techniques of communication and negotiation. We can, for example, see two persons who are fighting. . . . One should try to approach them and ask them where the problem is and then bring them together." The implication is that a culture of negotiation brings with it a certain responsibility, which involves engaging in situations one might have ignored or avoided previously.

Several peacekeepers describe using negotiation skills outside of the military context, sharing stories that demonstrate how they view both professional and personal relationships, as well as their engagement with society, through a conflict management lens.

Peacekeepers bring this disposition into their personal lives, as a Beninese peacekeeper notes:

In my family you know, from time to time maybe with one's sister, brother—if you approach them aggressively, . . . they may not know how to handle such issues and it may degenerate into a conflict or continuous disputes. But with this training, there is a way of handling the other collaborator. All that cannot be done simply as mock military training. But it comes [in] handy when seen from a level of friendship, the family, that one is familiar with—like. . . one's wife, children, brothers, and sisters.

This understanding of negotiation as both a skill and a disposition applicable in peacekeepers' nonmilitary life speaks to the power of negotiation to contribute to personal development. This framing has implications for how USIP talks about negotiation during training, as well as for the practical exercises USIP develops. By using negotiation skills in

their personal lives, these peacekeepers are developing their skills in ways that strengthen their capacity to manage nonviolent conflicts in a range of settings. Beyond contributing to peacekeepers' individual growth, the ongoing practice of negotiation skills may increase their ability to transfer conflict management skills to their military colleagues and to use them during future peacekeeping missions.

Finding 4: Community members lack a clear understanding of peacekeepers' mission.

Although peacekeepers report that they try to articulate their mission to the local population, community members generally do not feel that they have a clear understanding of what peacekeepers' mission is. In some cases, there is a disconnect between how peacekeepers understand their mission and what community members think the mission should be. Additionally, despite peacekeepers' expressed understanding of the importance of communicating and engaging with civilians, community members say they want more interaction with peacekeepers.

Peacekeepers view explaining their mission as a priority, as it leads to increased cooperation. A Burundian peacekeeper observes: "If you do not contact them, they will feel and think that you are keeping away from them." Tanzanian peacekeepers talk about the challenges of communicating with a population that has high expectations about peacekeepers' ability to solve all of their problems, but noted that if they are clear about what they can and cannot do, the population is more receptive. A Rwandan peacekeeper describes a similar dynamic, but characterizes the peacekeepers' role as "connective tissue" linking themselves and the population to others in mission who might help solve problems or meet needs.

It is clear from community members' responses that they have a strong desire for increased and better communication with peacekeepers. Community members report that they do not have a clear understanding of the mission and mandate of peacekeepers in their communities; that peacekeepers are either not present enough or not engaged with the community; and that peacekeepers could greatly benefit the community if they engaged in problem solving more often.

Some community members express uncertainty about what peacekeepers are empowered to do with regard to maintaining peace and stability. Others are of the opinion that peacekeeper mandates are not strong enough to allow peacekeepers to do what is needed to protect communities.

Community members talk frequently about a desire to have a better understanding of peacekeepers' role in their communities. A community member from the Democratic Republic of Congo describes the disconnect between what peacekeepers do and what community members expect; the suggestion is that the peacekeepers' mission is too limited:

Maybe we are blaming them for nothing, meanwhile their mission terms of reference [are] limited somewhat, they cannot go beyond that for risk of being also called in. That is why if we could revisit how far the mission of the peacekeepers goes, that is, at the local level...we should feel the involvement of the blue berets in different interventions, in the bludgeoning of unpatriotic activities, that is really the most urgent expectation of the people. Now we are afraid of [leaving] the house at 9 pm, whereas the peacekeepers are there! They have all the means, all the advantages; they have every possibility to intervene if their area of intervention could be extended.

Given that peacekeepers widely discuss and seem to understand the importance of communication in interacting with civilians, it may be worth exploring whether peacekeepers' mandates, or the interpretation of those mandates, in some way restrict peacekeepers from developing positive and productive relationships with the community they intend to protect.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the civilian population seems to recognize the importance of peacekeepers but expects them to be involved in local development projects,

particularly during the de-escalation phase of the conflict. In Kamina, residents have not witnessed the level of violent conflict experienced in North Kivu, and they therefore expect a different role for MONUSCO. For example, the Indian battalion helped renovate a school, and a battalion from Benin supported a farm for the central prison of Kamina. In Lubumbashi, people expect peacekeepers to fight local criminal groups. The range of expectations illustrates the poor understanding of MONUSCO's mandate and the need for greater communication by peacekeepers.

Finding 5: Community members want more constructive engagement with peacekeepers.

Community members talk frequently about their desire to have greater engagement with peacekeepers and to see peacekeepers more often in their communities. They also talk about the consequences that result when peacekeepers are not present.

A youth community member in the Democratic Republic of Congo talks about the negative consequences that arise when peacekeepers do not engage with communities: "That is why they are accused of every ill, because we do not see them in the field, in action when their services are needed." Another youth community member indicates that the lack of communication with peacekeepers leads to fear, because the local population is not sure which side of the conflict peacekeepers are on. In and of itself, the suggestion that peacekeepers take a side reveals a lack of clarity among community members about the purpose of peacekeeping and the role of peacekeepers.

In Somalia, community members talk about seeing peacekeepers only as they speed through communities in convoys, at times injuring civilians and contributing to a negative perception of peacekeepers. In Côte d'Ivoire, a community member laments that peacekeepers out on patrol rarely engage with civilians:

Yes, they stopped when they saw... a gathering of people, they stopped to ask if there was something wrong. If they saw nothing, often they did not even talk with people. If they saw a group somewhere, they would park their vehicle, they do not talk with anybody, they are there.

Another community member from Côte d'Ivoire describes the lack of communication with peacekeepers and says more generally: "We do not feel their closeness to the population." An ACOTA country manager underscores the importance of this closeness:

It's all about gaining an understanding of the problems in the hostile areas. Instead of avoiding the hostile areas, the peacekeepers should be setting up camp. Gaining an incremental understanding of the truth on the ground requires being close to the population and building trust with the community to understand the actors, the challenges, etc.

But "closeness" is a culturally bound concept. Some cultures may want peacekeepers to engage with various segments of the population, while others may want to limit engagement depending on individuals' role in the community, age, or gender. In Somalia, some of the male community members interviewed strongly assert that the peacekeepers should not communicate with local women. According to one Somali man, community members have to ensure that peacekeepers don't

integrate with the women. We tell them don't go to our women, don't give something to our women. Whatever you want to give them, just give us and then we give them... Don't go over [to] them and take other opportunities... So everything has to be collected through elders.

In contrast, some of the women in Somalia had positive experiences with peacekeepers, as they helped the women solve some of their problems with access to resources. One female community member communicates a desire for more female peacekeepers, who would be integrated more closely in communities; this is seen as a way to improve communication and increase understanding of the challenges women face.

Finding 6: Peacekeeper performance in protecting civilians in mission is inconsistent.

Despite more than twenty years of mandated protection of civilians in peace support missions and the recent establishment of the Kigali Principles (2015), peacekeepers continue to struggle in carrying out this critical mandate. Conversations with both peacekeepers and community members highlight significant inconsistencies around peacekeeper performance related to protecting civilians. Peacekeepers often note the critical importance of protecting civilians; they see it as the key component of their mission and give examples of situations in which they are able to act to fulfill this duty. Community members also have examples of peacekeepers successfully providing protection, but more often they note where peacekeepers fall short in this area.

Peacekeepers describe protection of civilians as a critical element of their mission.

When peacekeepers discuss protection of civilians, they list it with USIP's other training content, describe it as a critical element of their mission, or give specific examples where they tried to protect civilians.

A peacekeeper from Benin indicates there are limits to how much control peacekeepers have in protecting civilians, but notes that they utilize what they have learned to operationalize the protection of civilians. He talks about sometimes having to convince civilians to move to areas where they can be protected: "If you succeed to convince them, they understand. For us, we do not usually have the task to convince them, but we take measures to protect them because we are there because of that, protection of the civilian population." A Rwandan peacekeeper also explains that civilians were dying in 2009 before peacekeepers were deployed; but once they were deployed and began protecting civilians, civilians were no longer killed.

Peacekeepers give specific examples of situations in which they worked to protect civilians. A Tanzanian peacekeeper describes how they deployed to prevent one group from carrying out a revenge attack in Darfur. Peacekeepers told the group wanting revenge, "no, you can't do this in front of our eyes and our ears."

Community members do not always see peacekeepers protecting civilians. For community members living in areas where peacekeepers are deployed, conflict-related violence can create incredibly high security risks. Community members vary widely in how they describe the contribution of peacekeepers: some say they either prevent attacks on civilians or lessen the impact during attacks, while others see them as severely lacking in their ability or willingness to protect civilians from the fighting. In Côte d'Ivoire, two of the community members interviewed describe specific situations in which the actions of peacekeepers during outbreaks of violence helped to save lives. One community member relayed how the UNOCI peacekeepers responded to an outbreak of violence, and credited their response with preventing greater destruction. Another described a skirmish in which the presence of peacekeepers kept the number of casualties from increasing:

That day it was UNOCI that intervened, and... there were not many deaths. It is true that there were deaths, but it is thanks to UNOCI that it was not worse than it was that day. Even when the mosque was burnt, it was the UNOCI that prevented the worst from happening.

While some community members talk about peacekeepers protecting civilians, others identify a number of shortcomings, including peacekeepers' unwillingness or insufficient mandate to protect civilians, or their uncertainty about what they can actually do to protect them. A community member from Côte d'Ivoire describes the insufficient mandate: "Human life has to be protected. That is, act as is necessary. You cannot be there, looking at a civilian... who is not armed and is being massacred because you do not have a mandate to defend him." In Darfur, a community member describes how peacekeepers come only to document killings, but do not actually intervene. A resident of the Democratic Republic of

Congo describes being confused by the lack of patrols when people were being killed:

There were killings and people were saying, “but what is MONUSCO doing?” Clearly, I know that at a certain moment, they were doing patrols. We saw that they were doing patrols. They patrolled up to fifty kilometers, came back, and the time they were doing patrols, those things stopped. So they really have to increase [patrols], that is what the population wants.

Another community member from the Democratic Republic of Congo notes that peacekeepers have resources that they do not use sufficiently to protect the population:

The peacekeepers really have the logistical means... of bringing under control, in a matter of minutes, any unpatriotic incidents. They have the capacity, yes they do. But why don't they intervene? Why?... That is what hurts us. We welcomed with joy the arrival of the peacekeepers in our midst, but we do not feel their role in the town. One would say they are equally afraid in spite of the logistics at their disposal. We do not get it.

In some cases, community members are explicit about how peacekeepers can better protect civilians in their communities. A community member from the Democratic Republic of Congo notes,

To go about one's work, for a country to develop,... the most important factor is peace. Elsewhere, people have the possibility of strolling around till late without being worried, but here, when you just sight a group, it is insecurity everywhere. So if the blue berets could really get involved in local security, I think it will be a very [big] advantage.

In addition to wanting peacekeepers to be more directly engaged in providing security rather than only documenting crimes, community members want peacekeepers to work with local security forces—not only to build their capacity, but also to prevent them from harming civilians. In the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Somalia, community members advocate that peacekeepers should train local police and military. In both contexts, community members cite how much more peacekeepers are paid than local security, and they find the differential to be problematic.

Community members also advocate training local security forces as a measure to build peace. A community member in Democratic Republic of Congo describes such training as a way to provide a transition when peacekeepers leave, noting that “a sudden departure [of peacekeepers] will plunge the country into chaos” due to the ensuing lack of security at the borders and in villages.

A number of community members in Somalia mention potential training that peacekeepers could do for security forces. One community member from Somalia suggests that training the military will be more cost-effective:

I would advise... whoever is supporting [the] African mission in Somalia to help the troops to train,... because the AMISOM and the Somali National Army are in one boat. And also it helps the exit strategy, because when you equip the Somali[s] it is less [expensive] and much easier and they are more effective.

Finding 7: Peacekeepers and community members see peacekeeper involvement in sexual exploitation and abuse as a very real problem.

One of the greatest violations of the mission to protect civilians is sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of the local population. Conversations with peacekeepers and community members confirm that SEA is a very real problem and that it is on the minds of both peacekeepers and the communities they are meant to protect.

The United Nations defines sexual exploitation as “any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but

not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.” The term “sexual abuse” refers to “the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.”²⁸ The United Nations takes a zero-tolerance approach to SEA. UN rules forbid sexual relations with prostitutes and any persons under eighteen and strongly discourage relations with beneficiaries of assistance.

Peacekeepers talk about preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in their definition of a successful mission and an effective peacekeeper. Three peacekeepers specifically reference SEA in their framing of a successful mission and of a good and effective peacekeeper. It is important to note, however, that these interviews occurred after a spike in international attention on SEA.

One peacekeeper connects avoiding SEA to the notion of respect: “A good peacekeeper must respect the instructions of the UN. . . . You need to respect the local population, protect children. You have to avoid rape, sexual harassment, and you have to behave well too.” He continues,

You should not [be abusive] in all your actions; you have to respect the laws. . . . And usually the main problem during missions is women, sexual harassment or having sex with people during mission. That’s one thing that you have to avoid when you are working with the UN. You are a peacekeeper.

Another peacekeeper notes: “If you are a peacekeeper and you’re doing those things [sexual exploitation and sexual abuse], you are not respecting the rules. . . . You are not respecting the custom and the culture of the. . . host country. . . . You are a very bad sergeant peacekeeper.”

A third peacekeeper talks about the importance of disciplinary action for SEA violations:

Before we are deployed, we have a training of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. . . . There are. . . disciplinary measures that are taken against those people, and I think it’s normal to. . . discipline these people, to sanction them, because you are sent to mission in order to help people, not to do those bad things.

Despite these protestations that SEA is counter to effective peacekeeping, demonstrates a lack of cultural respect, and must be disciplined, there is evidence in peacekeeper and community member interviews that peacekeepers engage in SEA.

Peacekeepers engage in SEA. Framing a successful mission as one that avoids SEA is essential on the part of battalion leadership, as it can inform how peacekeepers talk about SEA with peacekeepers in their command. Not all peacekeepers share this understanding, however. In one instance, a peacekeeper talks about the strong support and “love” of the local population for the contingent from his country. When asked for examples that would give a sense of how this “love” from the population manifests itself, the peacekeeper shares the following:

For example, you know our soldiers, . . . if [they] have to spend six months, they need to satisfy their sexual urges and all that, that was easy. It is true that it is prohibited, but you can do everything because. . . our men have the ease to approach people within the population, and it helps such that we do not have many problems, people understand. . . . At times when there are soldiers who go looking for girls, even though it is prohibited, the population makes trouble for people, but I noticed that in Congo, people understand and they even encouraged our men to have the possibility.

In this case, the peacekeeper conflates SEA with satisfying sexual needs and desires. This particular framing is problematic principally because it ignores how SEA affects the targeted individual (girl, boy, woman, or man), the relationships that individual has at home, and their relationships in the community. Framing SEA as satisfying sexual desire also misses the notion that peacekeepers are in a position of power, and SEA is about power; it is not about sexual desire.

One might argue that the statement of one peacekeeper is not significant and therefore does not provide enough evidence to support a particular claim. It is important to remember, however, that one peacekeeper in a leadership position has the ability to influence all peacekeepers under his command. This particular voice suggests that work needs to be done to address the impact of SEA, whether transactional sex or rape, on individuals and communities, and that the many ways in which SEA violates the mandate to protect civilians also need to be clarified.

Community members talk about situations in which peacekeepers engage in prostitution, use pornography, and commit rape. They speak about the social consequences of this behavior (ostracizing of the victim) and the health consequences (the spread of disease from peacekeepers to community members).

In one situation, a community member links peacekeepers engaging in sexual activity to a lack of respect for women, framing SEA within the bounds of culture:

The [country X] contingent arrived here in broad daylight, we saw a [country X] soldier making love with a woman at the Hôtel de la Gare. We told the soldier that was not normal, how could you behave like that in broad daylight on the veranda? He apologized, "Well, you know that—" No, no, no. You know that we are in Africa. In Africa we respect people. Even the women whom you pay, you have to respect them. That we told him.

Like some peacekeepers, this community member makes a connection between SEA and a lack of respect for culture, though in this case, the community member also makes a connection to human dignity.

Referring to peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a community member notes one of the many consequences of peacekeepers engaging in prostitution:

Those people love prostitution, and we are exposed to multiple diseases. . . . I had a friend who was living with a [soldier from country Y]. The guy wanted to 'sleep' with her without a condom but the lady refused. . . and said they could no longer continue. Our problem is that the province is enclaved, and with the arrival of those people, since they love debauchery, we are really exposed to sexually transmissible diseases.

Several community members in the Democratic Republic of Congo refer to an incident in which a peacekeeper was involved in a local pornography ring:

Interviewee: There were even children who were not able to even go to school because they were found in such pictures.

Interviewer: Were they able to sanction those who had done that?

Interviewee: We wanted to, even a name was cited of a MONUSCO agent, but after that, when it became a little hot, the man disappeared like he was made to vamoose by the MONUSCO guys.

Another community member cites the pornography incident and the response: "The girl was found there and it provoked a series of stories, but when we tried to raise our voice, we were told they [peacekeepers] were the 'untouchables,' they are immunized. . . . We are blocked at that level."

This incident shows how the perception of impunity and a lack of accountability can affect whether community members feel protected and how they interact with peacekeepers in their area.

In Darfur, community members talk about the stories they have heard of SEA from groups engaged in conflict and of attempts to report rape cases. They give examples of contingents who were very responsive in reporting, and examples in which peacekeepers did not report incidents, leaving women feeling vulnerable: "Women. . . are not feeling safe and really. . . they cannot move or they cannot go out."

The inconsistency in how well civilians are protected from SEA, including how fully peacekeepers adhere to the United Nation’s zero tolerance policy and report incidents among the population, suggests that far greater training is needed around what constitutes SEA and how it damages individuals and societies. The UN’s language around sexual relations, specifically “strongly [discouraging] relations with beneficiaries of assistance” is ambiguous and can create challenges for peacekeepers who believe they are adhering to UN rules by having sexual relations with consenting adult civilians. In a conflict context, one might argue that all citizens are beneficiaries of assistance, which then suggests that peacekeepers cannot have sexual relations with any civilian.

Finding 8: Participant-centered training adds value to ACOTA’s pre-deployment training for peacekeepers.

Interviews with peacekeepers and ACOTA staff reveal that USIP’s civilian-led training is an essential complement to ACOTA’s pre-deployment training. ACOTA staff cite the added value of a civilian organization contributing to pre-deployment training, and peacekeepers cite the value of a participant-centered approach.

A civilian lens enhances pre-deployment training. Training by a nonmilitary organization complements ACOTA’s program. USIP’s “negotiation at a roadblock” role-play exercise, which is used to practice negotiation skills, is similar to a live exercise and was developed based on input from a TCC military. USIP and ACOTA use the same basic scenario in the negotiation exercise—peacekeepers are escorting a humanitarian convoy when it meets an illegal checkpoint—but USIP’s approach is not military; it instead focuses on communication and understanding interests.

In interviews, peacekeepers consistently refer to the importance of establishing a relationship with adversaries, suggesting that this is part of the USIP training they applied when deployed. A Beninese peacekeeper captures the added value of USIP’s lens: “[ACOTA] sticks to the military—that is to say, the postures that should be taken in front of someone. Your elements that are with you, how they should secure the area such that you, as a leader, can approach the person.” USIP’s training, on the other hand, “is not linked to the military; it adds to the military aspect that we use in the ACOTA program.” USIP’s approach provides an additional set of alternatives from which peacekeepers can choose when faced with a conflict situation during their mission.

An experiential, participant-centered approach facilitates learning. Both peacekeepers and ACOTA field staff note the value of USIP’s training methods, which are rooted in adult learning theory. Those interviewed find that the practical exercises, role plays, and simulations are particularly helpful in giving participants the opportunity to apply skills. One country manager reflects on the importance of having peacekeepers practice skills: “We can talk about it all day long but when they have to apply it, when they have to step up there and do it, . . . then that’s where the real learning occurs.” One of the ACOTA trainers interviewed notes that graduates of the USIP training were seen applying what they had learned to their own military exercises. This use of the USIP training suggests that the work USIP does through the trainings is a natural follow-on to ACOTA’s work.

In multiple interviews, peacekeepers refer to the practical exercises in USIP’s training as a distinguishing element of the program. A Burundian peacekeeper and military trainer who deployed to Somalia notes: “In the USIP training, they try to do practical exercises, which [promotes] better understanding. The practical exercises are similar to those we will do.” Another Burundian distinguishes between the ACOTA military training, which focuses on “preparing to fight against Al Shabaab,” and USIP’s training on negotiation, which is “about

everyday practice.” The 2013 Training Needs Assessment conducted by DPKO includes recommendations to further improve the pre-deployment training and materials that support USIP’s approach. Based on the most frequent responses from interviewees and respondents to staff and member state surveys, the Training Needs Assessment recommends a “more practical and dynamic approach, including simulations and exercises.”²⁹

USIP’s approach to content and pedagogy as distinct from military training has implications for the training practice of peacekeeping training centers. There is space for training centers to consider how to communicate information and skills in ways that lead to higher-order thinking and application.

Recommendations for Peacekeeping Policy and Practice

This assessment is intended to enhance the content and delivery of USIP’s CMTF program, but the analysis of the data from 137 interviews with peacekeepers, community members in mission areas, ACOTA trainers, and USIP trainers also suggest recommendations for peacekeeping policy more broadly:

- **Pre-deployment training for peacekeepers must include conflict management.** The data reveal that peacekeepers use core negotiation skills to defuse conflict, suggesting that nonviolent conflict management skills should be part of the training of all peacekeepers.
- **Peacekeeping training institutions must use practical, applied exercises to ensure skills transfer.** Participants in pre-deployment peacekeeping trainings that require skills transfer benefit from interactive, experiential approaches rooted in adult learning theory.
- **Peacekeeping training institutions should include a civilian lens to complement a military approach.** As institutions and TCCs explore how best to prepare peacekeepers for missions, they should consider the value of including civilian organizations with a nonmilitary focus to complement the military training peacekeepers receive.
- **Peacekeeping training institutions must incorporate an approach to cultural understanding that encourages thinking critically rather than learning a list of cultural characteristics.** Peacekeepers will benefit more from an approach to cultural awareness that encourages them to think critically about how to engage across cultures than from an approach that provides lists of cultural dos and don’ts.
- **Peacekeeping training institutions must strengthen training in how to communicate mandates effectively to local populations. Peacekeepers must learn how to articulate their mission to community members.** They should assume that community members do not know why they are present and should be prepared to talk to community members who may not want them in their community.
- **Pre-deployment training must address the ambiguous language in the UN framing of SEA.** The United Nations more broadly should rethink the language in policies that contribute to ambiguity for peacekeepers, e.g., “relationships are discouraged” instead of relationships are forbidden.
- **Institutions providing training for peacekeepers to address SEA must examine training content and approach.** Institutions should ensure content includes conversations around gender and masculinity as contributing factors to SEA. Training must address underlying cultural assumptions around gender and must address rape as a demonstration of power.

Recommendations for Conflict Management Training for Peacekeepers

In addition to recommendations for peacekeeping more broadly, the assessment findings suggest numerous recommendations related to the improvement of training content, design, and delivery. For the purposes of this Special Report, the recommendations below focus on a select few that can benefit training programs beyond USIP's Conflict Management Training for Peacekeepers. These recommendations are intended to provide concrete actions that can lead to change.

- **Develop content on intercultural communication that supports critical thinking around culture so peacekeepers understand culture as more than a list of characteristics.** For peacekeepers to effectively engage with local populations, they must be able to negotiate ethical, historical, moral, political, or religious differences that are embedded in culture. Cultural competence requires knowledge of other people's cultures and behaviors, empathy, and knowledge of one's own cultural identity. The 2012–13 peacekeeping Training Needs Assessment, conducted by DPKO's Integrated Training Service, identifies understanding of local context, including history, customs, and culture, as a priority training need.³⁰ It is also necessary to integrate training around communication, culture, and respect in ways that highlight the intersectional, mutually reinforcing nature of these areas.
- **Develop clearer content establishing the range of applications for negotiation skills.** Given the range of contexts in which peacekeepers apply negotiation skills (or conversely, do not identify themselves as needing to apply these skills), there is a need to clarify levels of conflict, to present different models of negotiation for different contexts, and to provide a more nuanced account of what it means to negotiate.
- **Conduct regular context analyses and assessments** with the various stakeholders who are part of peacekeeper pre-deployment training to ensure the changing landscape is integrated into the training. To the extent possible, future trainings should include interviews with peacekeepers who have deployed and returned. Conflict analysis and understanding of the local context should also be emphasized during training, so that peacekeepers become more aware of the dynamic nature of the analysis and the context.
- **Regularly update the content of training for peacekeepers to include role plays and simulations,** as well as other exercises and content, based on actual events that reflect the most current environment. Doing so will align training with the context of the mission and mandate.
- **Create training exercises that teach communication as a means of building relationships and negotiating.** The goal should be to develop habits of mind in which such communication becomes a natural way for peacekeepers to approach interactions. This approach may help peacekeepers adopt conflict management skills outside of peacekeeping missions, contributing to peacebuilding in their home communities.
- **Revise training content to ensure it relates back to protection of civilians and emphasizes nonsecurity aspects of this mandate,** such as provision of services, respect for human rights, etc. Peacekeepers' tasks happen within the boundaries of their missions, orders, and other parameters that are generally unknown to the public. However, their impact, either real or as perceived by the population, is defined by people's particular needs, sense of security, and expectations. In general, local populations seem to appreciate it when peacekeepers work with them in addressing not only security-related

issues, but also their overall well-being. Content on protection of civilians must be created to raise awareness, develop skills, and enrich knowledge for proactive engagement with civilians in ways that go beyond preventing conflict to address local needs.

- **Develop scenarios and exercises to help peacekeepers understand SEA as abuse of power** and to see SEA's negative consequences for the communities they serve, the mission, and themselves. Final exercises should integrate issues related to gender and SEA.
- **Develop new content that focuses on gender and masculinity** to address the social and cultural norms that allow SEA to exist and continue.

Conclusions and Next Steps

As peacekeepers' and community members' stories illustrate, peacekeepers use conflict management skills—communication, analysis, negotiation, and mediation—in a range of settings. Utilizing these skills allows them to accomplish mission-related tasks and to protect civilians.

Based on the findings and recommendations detailed above, the Academy will undertake a process of detailed curriculum revision. It will begin by assembling an advisory board to contribute to the curriculum revision process. The advisory board will comprise experts in the various content areas of the training, including protection of civilians, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, negotiation, intercultural communication, and other areas identified as key to the training. Once the content for a revised curriculum has been determined, the team will use the stories provided by peacekeepers and community members to create new scenarios, role plays, and simulations. These exercises will be regularly updated based on ongoing conversations with returned peacekeepers as part of the standard five-day training, thus ensuring the content of the training remains as up-to-date as possible.

The findings and recommendations highlight the need for training to be flexible and to adjust to changing realities on the ground. The challenge for USIP's training program will be to balance the need to keep content up to date with the reality of limited human and financial resources in a time of fiscal restraint. The way forward will require creative approaches to gathering and sharing information; these may be facilitated by new partnerships between peacekeeping training institutions that promote a coordinated approach to conflict management training for peacekeepers.

Notes

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11. J. Wall and D. Druckman, "Mediation in Peacekeeping Missions," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 5 (2003).
12. D. Curran, "Training for Peacekeeping: Towards Increased Understanding of Conflict Resolution?" *International Peacekeeping* 20, no. 1 (2013): 80–97.
13. U.S. Department of State, "ACOTA—Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance," www.state.gov/p/af/rt/acota/.
14. These trainings originally lasted from three to five days. Since August 2014, all have lasted five days.
15. USIP no longer trains peacekeepers deploying to UNIFIL.
16. Although ACOTA is active in 23 countries, the Academy has trained in 20 countries.
17. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "OECD Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities," 2008, www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dcdndep/39774573.pdf.
18. For more details, see Donald L. Kirkpatrick and James D. Kirkpatrick, *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Beretta-Koehler Publishers, 2006).
19. The mission areas are AMISOM in Somalia; UNOCI in Côte d'Ivoire; MONUSCO in Democratic Republic of Congo; MINUSCA in Central African Republic; UNAMID in Darfur; and MINUSMA in Mali.
20. Only surveys that had been entered manually into a database were used for this assessment, and only surveys that were in the database by the time of the document review were analyzed.
21. W. Hansen, O. Ramsbotham, and T. Woodhouse, "Hawks and Doves: Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution," Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2004, 9.
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