

## Module Content

### Slide 1



### Structure of the Presentation

A standard presentation on gender equality in peacekeeping at the basic level should cover:

- Impact of conflict on women and men
- Women and men building peace
- Gender equality, culture and human rights
- How peacekeepers can promote gender equality.

### Slide 2

- **Impact of conflict on women and men**
- **Women and men building peace**
- **Gender equality, culture and human rights**
- **How peacekeepers can promote gender equality**

### Impact of Conflict on Women and Men

Conflict has different impacts on women and girls, and men and boys.

**Upheaval, displacement, forced recruitment, abduction.** Conflict, especially conflicts within a country, result in major social and economic upheaval. In recent years, civilians, mostly women, children and the elderly, have been deliberately targeted. Many flee their home communities in search of safety away from conflict zones. Women constitute the majority of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Refugees and IDPs often arrive at reception centres traumatized by attacks before and during flight. The nature of the attacks may vary depending on whether the victims were women and girls or men and boys; as a result, each group has different needs for support and rehabilitation.

Women and girls in refugee camps and displaced camps may be subjected to further abuse, including sexual abuse, in camps by other camp residents or camp officials, who may demand sex in exchange for rations and other benefits. Men in refugee and displaced camps are often frustrated by the loss of their traditional roles as head of the household and protector of the family and can become depressed or violent.

Men and boys face the dangers of fighting and the risk of death or injury in combat. Without their men to protect them, women and girls face increased risks of physical assaults and vulnerability to sexual and other exploitation. While men and young boys are often forcibly conscripted or abducted to serve in armed forces or militias, women and girls are abducted to serve as sex slaves for combatants. Women and girls are also forced to support combatants in a range of activities, as messengers or cooks, and other roles.

Peacekeepers should be aware of such different experiences of men and women, girls and boys, to be able to respond appropriately to their different needs. A study of boys and girls in Uganda who had been abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army showed that girls became withdrawn, lacked confidence, felt ashamed and took a long time to talk about their experiences, while boys became angry and violent and talked more openly about what they had suffered.

### Slide 3

#### Different impacts of

- **Upheaval**
- **Displacement**
- **Forced recruitment**
- **Abduction**
- **Sexual abuse**

**Security issues, increased human rights violations.** During conflict, normal restraints placed on unacceptable conduct through formal regulatory systems of law and order or informal ones of tradition and culture may disappear. Violence against civilians, particularly sexual violence, is a prevalent feature of current conflicts.

Women and girls, and often men and boys, too, are tortured and sexually abused with impunity. Sexual violence is used to humiliate, terrify and intimidate the victims and their loved ones. All victims of rape and sexual violence suffer long-term emotional and psychological damage as well as physical damage. Exposure to sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS is sometimes deliberate, as in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. Women and girls may be raped with the intention that they bear the children of the enemy, as was the case in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Women and girls raped in war often face rejection by their families and communities once hostilities cease and may be victimized yet again. Men and boys who are victims of sexual violence and rape in war are reluctant to talk about the abuse because of the shame attached to it; therefore it is seldom brought to light. Such violence may not necessarily end with the conflict; it may continue at the hands of camp officials and even peacekeepers.

In determining security concerns of the local population, peacekeepers should consult both women and men about issues they face and the impacts of violence they might have experienced. Peacekeepers should talk to women and men separately; perhaps, using a female peacekeeper to interview the local women to encourage their participation.

### Slide 4

### **During conflict**

- **Collapse of law and order**
- **Absence of cultural, traditional restraints**
- **Differing security concerns**

**Loss of public services, infrastructure.** Conflict destroys or disrupts government and social services, such as education and health; it causes shortages in goods and services — prices of essential commodities may rise, an illegal black market for such goods may grow. The physical infrastructure (roads, bridges, transport, power and communication lines) are often also badly damaged in times of conflict. Women also lose access to reproductive health care and schooling for their children.

Men and women often lose their peacetime jobs and pensions. The land they used to work may have been mined or their crops destroyed. Women, who may already have limited access to jobs and means of survival before the conflict, are particularly vulnerable in this environment. They may now be heading households and may be sole providers for extended families of children and elderly relatives.

**Violent crime.** Poverty, desperation and the weakness of the rule of law may allow violent crime to increase dramatically in post-conflict societies, especially as small arms and weapons abound. Women and children are vulnerable to violent crime and often fall prey to organized crime as they face increasing pressures to earn a living. Some may be forced to turn to begging and prostitution. Trafficking of women and children is also a feature of a post-war, criminal economy. It is well documented that domestic violence by males in the home against women and children increases in post-conflict societies.

Peacekeepers should find that the period immediately after war is volatile when violence can take many new forms. Men and women face different challenges when normal services and infrastructure collapse and have different needs and reactions to those challenges. Peacekeepers should be aware of such differences and factor them into planning and implementing peacekeeping activities and report on them in their routine reporting duties.

### **Slide 5**

#### **Volatile post-conflict situations**

- ◆ **Collapse of services, infrastructure**
- ◆ **Fewer economic opportunities**
- ◆ **More crime and violence**

**Ex-combatants and their dependants.** Post-conflict efforts should not focus only on male ex-combatants, neglecting the role of women during and after conflict. In past demobilization exercises, female combatants have found their needs either partially or completely ignored in the demobilization incentive packages given to ex-combatants. Demobilization packages may have included only male clothing or implements of little use to women.

Women and girls who played support roles to combatants may be excluded from demobilization programmes altogether. Women and girls who were abducted and were “bush wives” of

combatants may be rejected by these partners after the war. If they are not accepted back by their families, these women and their children may be abandoned and left destitute. Demobilization programmes therefore need to take account of and provide for dependants of combatants and other camp followers.

Disarmament activities can gain from focusing on women as well as men. For example, women often know of stockpiles of weapons and are keen to rid their communities of arms. Such issues are discussed in greater depth in SGTM 12 on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR).

Peacekeepers involved in planning and implementing DDR programmes should be sure to address the special needs of female ex-combatants and families and the dependants of combatants. Such a focus might enhance the success of the DDR programme by acting as an incentive to disarm.

### Slide 6

- **Needs of female ex-combatants**
- **Wives and dependants of combatants**
- **Successful DDR should meet the needs of all**

**Changes in responsibilities.** When their men go to war, women stay home and take on the responsibilities of the absent men. As heads of households, they have to provide for their families and make all family decisions. Some women may go to war as combatants. In Nicaragua, for example, about 30 per cent of the combatants of the Sandinista National Liberation Front were women. Such novel roles and responsibilities as heads of households and combatants have the positive effect of empowering some women.

As combatants, women experience equal treatment with men, which they may not have enjoyed in civilian life. As they experience the risks and responsibilities of combat together, male and female combatants may see each other as equals. Peacekeepers will encounter women who have had a wide range of experiences of conflict, not only as victims, but also in leadership roles alongside men in the transition to peace.

### Slide 7

#### Women as

- **Heads of households**
- **Combatants and leaders**
- **Equal to men**

#### ACTIVITY

Divide trainees into small groups of four or five. Ask them to discuss for 5 minutes other ways they might know that conflict impacts differentially on women and men, and roles that men and women take in conflict. Ask them to think about what they would do as peacekeepers to deal with the different experiences and needs of women and men, boys and girls. Then invite people from the groups to feed back some of their points of discussion to the whole class.

## ACTIVITY

Show picture of a man and the little girl disabled by landmines. Ask the trainees to volunteer what they think the different impacts of their injuries would have on each individual's life. What could they do? What could they not do? How would society treat them? Who would care for them? Prompt for issues specific to their future roles as men and women:

- The man might no longer be able to work and provide for his dependants.
- The little girl might be less likely to find a mate.

## Slide 8

### Picture of a man and a young girl disabled by landmines

## Women and Men Building Peace

Both women and men have key roles in peacemaking and peacebuilding.

**Conflict brings change.** Many women play a more public role in war than they do during times of peace, as combatants, as heads of households or community leaders. The increased responsibility of women in wartime is often not recognized when the conflict is over. Women are expected to revert to their former roles after the conflict. The return to peace can thus mean a step backward for some women. Their inability to contribute their voice and experience in rebuilding post-conflict society may result in the loss of valuable human resources for building the peace. Relationships of equality forged during the conflict are a positive step towards a new, democratic society and should be encouraged. Both men and women should be involved in all stages of peacemaking and peacebuilding.

**Building peace.** Both men and women are peacebuilders. Men, however, usually take the lead role in the negotiation process and in planning what the post-conflict society should look like. Women may work in their communities to reach peace, but are usually not included in the formal peace negotiations, which are undertaken by men.

Women are frequently peacemakers at the informal, community level, as they have been in Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. They contribute directly to peace efforts by mobilizing for action to stop the fighting, lobbying political figures for peace, trying to persuade young men to give up their arms and stop fighting. Yet they find themselves excluded from the formal peace negotiations and peace agreements. Peace negotiation and agreements are more comprehensive and have better chances of success when both women and men are involved.

Both men and women have a stake in building a peaceful society, and so both must be involved in all stages — formal peacebuilding, political decisions, economic planning. A society recovering from armed conflict needs the contribution of all its members, so men and women must have equal opportunities to use their skills and experience.

## ACTIVITY

Encourage group discussion on the following points.

- While women work informally to reach peace, they are usually not included in the formal peace negotiations, which are undertaken by men.
- Women who have been active in brokering peace have found ways to challenge that and be included in the formal process as well.
- Women bring different perspectives and experiences from men to the peace table; everyone's perspective should be given a hearing in rebuilding a society that attends to everyone's needs.
- Women are likely to provide a fuller picture of community problems than men, because they have usually taken care of the young, the old and the infirm throughout the conflict.

### Slide 9

- **Conflict brings about social change**
- **Both women and men play key roles in peace**
- **Building peace requires participation of men and women**

### Gender Equality, Culture and Human Rights

What does gender equality mean?

#### ACTIVITY

Ask students to think about what their culture expects of women and men: how they should behave or not behave; what jobs each can do or not do; what are the social, cultural or other restrictions on men and women. Ask trainees to think about how they were taught to deal with the opposite sex. What could the boys in their own family do? What could the girls in the family do? What about their mothers and fathers? Did their fathers have to bring in all the money? Did their mothers have to do all the work at home? Did the girls have to help their mothers' in the home and not the boys?

### Slide 10

#### **Pictures of men and women in non-traditional occupations**



What society expects of women and men is different from one country and culture to another. People often confuse what is natural or biological with what is learned behaviour. For example, in some cultures, it is considered “unnatural” for women to drive, and for men to take care of

children. But we know that this is not about what is natural, it is about what we are taught. Men can care for children, and women can drive. The things that are “natural” for women and men are the things that are part of their biology. Biological differences between women and men are what identify them as female or male. These don’t change. They are the same, universally.

As boys and girls grow up they learn to be different, as their societies teach them what is considered right behaviour for males and females. But these can change and do change. Such differences are called gender differences. It is the different things men and women do, and what is considered by society to be appropriate for them, that we call gender roles.

#### ACTIVITY

Ask trainees to provide examples of gender differences from their own experience. Write these on a flip chart and discuss the appropriateness of the examples.

**Gender and sex.** Many languages lack a literal translation for the word “gender”, so it is often impossible to translate the term. It is important to explain that there is a difference between the biological differences between men and women, and what they learn from society as boys and girls about how each should behave. The word “gender” is used to describe such learned behaviour.

- We are all born male or female.
- As boys and girls, we learn about how we are expected to act and think.
- Because this is learned, we can also learn different things.
- History shows us that what our parents learned has changed — men and women are different from their parents and grandparents and act differently from them.
- What was considered inappropriate for men and boys to do a few decades ago, like cook or care for children, has changed in many cultures, and men do these things now.
- Women can take on jobs and responsibilities, like fighting in the army, that would have been considered inappropriate for their mothers.
- Every culture is changing all the time, and men and women change with it.
- Often war and conflict bring about rapid social and cultural changes, and changes in what men and women do, and how they think.
- As peacekeepers, you should be aware of these kinds of changes, and support those changes which are bringing more equality between men and women.

#### Slide 11

- **Sex is...**
  - **Biologically determined**
  - **Determined by birth**
  - **Universal**
  - **Unchanging**
- **Gender is...**
  - **Socially determined**
  - **Determined by culture**

- **Culture specific**
- **Changes over time**

#### ACTIVITY

Hand out the case scenario. Ask trainees to form small groups and discuss the questions for about 10 or 15 minutes and write the answers down on paper so they can feed them back to the whole group. Take the answers and points from one group, and then add anything new that the others have to say. Explain that it is not a test — it is an exercise to try and find the best way of dealing with the situation.

**Culture changes over time.** The comment is often heard that, “We are not here to change the culture.” That may be true; but a peace operation, by its very presence, contributes to cultural change. Culture is always in a state of change; it is not static. Conflict accelerates changes in the culture. As a peacekeeper, your job is to uphold what is fair and just, according to United Nations standards.

**Universally accepted human rights standards.** As a peacekeeper, your personal cultural value system is not the guide for making decisions in a United Nations peace operation. Member States have agreed on a set of universally recognized human rights — the International Bill of Human Rights (reference 84) and other international human rights conventions — and these are the accepted standards that United Nations peace operations must adhere to, promote and defend. Resolution 1325 explains your responsibilities to promote gender equality and human rights in peacekeeping activities (reference 81).

**Peacekeepers must promote human rights.** International human rights laws are based on universally shared values regarding respect for the dignity of the individual. Human rights apply to everyone equally, but often women are denied these rights. Discrimination against women is a violation of human rights. A society torn by war can only be healed if all its members feel that justice is being done for the wrongs they suffered. Often wrongs done to women are not given the same weight as those done to men. This omission may slow down the national reconciliation and healing process adversely affecting the peace process. These issues are explained further in SGTM 8 on human rights.

**Respect and trust contribute to security:** Peacekeepers have a responsibility to understand and respect the local culture, and what is expected of women and men in that culture. They must develop trust with everyone in the host population, and address human rights violations when they occur. In doing so, they increase their personal security and improve the effectiveness of the operation.

#### Slide 12

- **Culture changes over time**
- **Universally accepted human rights standards**
- **Peacekeeper must promote human rights**
- **Respect and trust contribute to security**

## How Can Peacekeepers Promote Gender Equality

Promoting gender equality, which is a human rights issue, can only support the consolidation of peace in the long term. Not only is it a legal obligation for peacekeepers to promote gender equality, but it also improves the effectiveness of peacekeeping activities, as men and women of the host population benefit from the intervention.

There are many different tasks and activities of a peace operation that can have a direct, beneficial impact on gender equality. Examples of them are discussed in all the other modules. Some general tasks are listed here that peacekeepers can do to promote gender equality.

- **Observe carefully!** When on patrol, or involved in any other activity, observe what the different activities of men and women are, where and when they carry them out. Consider the security issues for children on the way to school, and the different risks for boys and girls. Where do women go to get food, fuel, water? How safe are these areas?
- **Investigate properly!** Talk to both the women and the men to find out the full story. Do not assume that men can give you the whole picture, or know what the women think. Local women may be more comfortable talking to female peacekeepers or talking in a group.
- **Report accurately!** Make sure your reports reflect the realities for both women and men. Always have a checklist of the issues you need to cover in your reports so that you include the relevant facts about the situation for women and for men.
- **Behave respectfully!** Peacekeepers are powerful in relation to the local population. Peacekeepers have money, mobility, access to food, water and other goods. They also have the ability to use force. This results in a power imbalance between peacekeepers and the host population. Make sure you use this power to do good, supporting dignity and equality between women and men. The United Nations does not tolerate exploitation of local people.

### Slide 13

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Observe carefully!</b></li><li>• <b>Investigate properly!</b></li><li>• <b>Report accurately!</b></li><li>• <b>Behave respectfully!</b></li></ul> |
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### Summary

The three most important messages of this module are:

- Women and men experience conflict differently, and these differences should be taken into account when planning and implementing peacekeeping activities.
- Building long-term peace requires both men and women to play a part at all stages of the process.
- To be an effective peacekeeper, you must understand the importance of gender equality as a human rights issue and as an essential factor for successful peacekeeping.

## Slide 14

- **Conflict impacts differently on women and men**
- **Women and men build peace together**
- **Promoting gender equality is a human rights issue and essential for effective peacekeeping**

### Case Scenario

In a country coming out of three decades of civil war, an owner of a cashew plantation died in the conflict, leaving behind three daughters and a son. He left the cashew plantation to his eldest daughter, whose husband was badly injured in the fighting and was confined to a wheelchair. His son, the youngest of the family, became a refugee in a neighbouring country. The other two sisters also fled to other countries during the war. The eldest daughter remained behind and became the head of the household, supporting other elderly relatives as well as her children and disabled husband.

When harvest time came, she sent her children to gather the cashew, a valuable and scarce crop in the post-conflict economy. Her brother's son, who had returned to the farm after the cessation of hostilities, claimed the plantation was rightfully his. He accused his aunt of trespass and attacked her children, who were harvesting the crop. An assault case was brought against him.

Traditionally, property was inherited by sons from their fathers. Because the brother remained a refugee, his son claimed to be the rightful owner of the land and its crop. Yet, the eldest daughter said the land was left to her by her father, and had papers to prove it. Unfortunately, she had sent the papers out of the country with her sisters for safekeeping. Despite her belief that the land is hers, she begins to collect money to pay her brother for the land.

The community sentiment was against the daughter, believing that her claim went against the local tradition for the males of the family to inherit property. This tradition should not change, the village elders believed. Consequently, certain community members threatened the eldest daughter and her children. She sought help and advice from the United Nations peace operation.

### Group Discussion

Ask the following questions:

- If she came to you, how would you manage the situation?
- What would you say? What advice would you give?
- What does this case tell you about cultural and social change for men and women?

Raise the following key points during the discussion:

- It is common for women to be heads of household during and after conflict and to take on the support of family groups.
- Even though the brother is absent, the community still considers him the head of the household and the rightful heir to the land.

- The daughter has legal rights, but this clashes with tradition — what is the responsibility of the United Nations?
- It is important to consider the needs of all parties, including the physical threat to the eldest daughter and her children.
- What legal recourse, if any, does she have?