THE IMPACT OF THE INDIAN FORMED POLICE UNIT IN THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN LIBERIA

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By

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ABSTRACT

Among the United Nations’ efforts to incorporate women and women’s perspectives in peacekeeping, one attention-grabbing initiative is the deployment of its first all-female Formed Police Unit. Composed of experienced Indian police officers, the female FPU has operated in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) since 2007. Among its successes are increased female recruitment to the Liberia National Police and a reduction of crime in its area of Monrovia. This article uses representative bureaucracy theory to assess the actions and effects of the Indian Unit, and finds that the Unit achieved its results through both passive and active representation, with the signal sent by its presence amplified by its efforts on behalf of Liberian women and girls. The Unit’s unusual impacts offer lessons for future peacekeeping missions both with regard to women in peacekeeping and to best practices for policing post-conflict situations.
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Introduction

One hundred five Indian policewomen were deployed to the UN Mission in Liberia on 31 January 2007, and became, immediately, a global media sensation. As the core of the first female formed police unit (FPU) ever deployed to a UN peacekeeping operation, they were a novelty. They were also an experiment. Although women make up increasing numbers of personnel across multidimensional peace operations, they tend to be rare within the military and police contingents. Three years later, the Indian FPU have won praise from political figures - United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called them “an example that must be repeated in U.N. peacekeeping missions all over the world,” – and senior UN officials. The unit has inspired imitation by Bangladesh and Nigeria, and has been credited with improving the security of women and girls in Liberia, and encouraging them to join the country’s newly reconstructed security services. To the extent that these claims are true, the all-female police unit appears to be a powerful new tool in the difficult task of rebuilding a state after massive internal violent conflict. Greater protection of a part of the population particularly vulnerable during and after conflicts – and greater participation by those women, a traditionally untapped resource, in security sector reconstruction efforts, are significant achievements with potentially deep and enduring benefits.

But what is the precise effect of the Indian policewomen? The unit is but one of five Formed Police Units within the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), and it shares the same mandate as the other four. How, beyond the gender of the peacekeepers, does it differ from

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1 The female police officers were accompanied by 20 male support staff, so strictly speaking the FPU was predominantly rather than completely female.
the others? What outcomes has it produced, and how did it produce them? These questions are of particular importance as powerful states and intergovernmental organizations grapple with the complexities of post-conflict peacebuilding and security sector reform.

This paper examines the Indian FPU’s impact both on the Liberian population and on UN peacekeeping techniques, and finds that its predominantly female composition provided almost immediate tactical benefits for the UN Mission in Liberia, primarily through the well-publicized presentation of the Unit as an “inspiration” for Liberian women. The Unit’s long-term effects are less obvious, but arguably more promising. Here the gender of the Unit’s members remains relevant, but of at least equal importance are the Unit’s actions, which went far beyond those of Liberia’s other FPUs in building relationships between the Unit and the community.

In establishing a framework for analysis of the Indian Unit, this paper draws on current academic and policy discussion regarding women in peacekeeping, the effects of female representation within a bureaucracy on women in the public, and policing in post-conflict situations. Research indicates that female participation in peacekeeping operations can bring a broad range of benefits to both the mission and host country women. However, the processes by which these outcomes are achieved have not been closely investigated, leading to a frequent attribution of these effects to women peacekeepers’ supposed superiority in qualities such as “communications skills” or “compassion” or “calm”. This paper argues that although current research does not disprove these assertions, it fails to provide them with a firm foundation. Moreover, portraying these qualities simply as the preserve of women rather than men neglects

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the influence of institutional contexts in fostering or discouraging their use, and implies policy responses based simply on increasing the numbers of women in peacekeeping rather than assessing and improving the methods peacekeepers use to achieve their objectives.

This paper presents representative bureaucracy theory as a more useful framework to analyze how female participation in peacekeeping improves outcomes, as it explores processes through which women in a bureaucracy improve service provision for women in the public. Based on the premise that a population will have greater confidence in and be better served by a bureaucracy whose demographic characteristics match its own, representative bureaucracy theory has not previously been applied to international peacekeeping, but there are compelling reasons why it is appropriate. International peacekeepers are required to enforce and maintain stability in fragile post-conflict societies, but they are, by virtue of being foreign, less representative of a society than national security forces. They thus face substantial obstacles in gaining the public engagement they need to operate effectively. Predominantly male peacekeeping forces have often failed to recognize, let alone address, the needs of populations with significant proportions of women. The inclusion of women in peacekeeping forces should therefore improve both the host country population’s confidence in the peacekeeping operation, and improve the operation’s security provision.

An area where female representation should therefore have immediate and long-term benefits is in post-conflict policing and police reform, the two core tasks of the UN police (UNPOL). Following principles of democratic and community policing, this paper argues that public confidence is critical both to UNPOL’s successful provision of law enforcement and to its reconstruction of a police force motivated and able to serve the public. Including women in UNPOL should improve UNPOL’s relationship with the host country society, and therefore
increase its chances of mission success.

This paper applies these concepts to UNMIL’s Indian Unit, tracing how the various successes it achieved resulted from its signaling effects, its interaction with Liberian citizens, and its influence on other officials within the UN and the Liberian Government. It assesses those successes in light of UNMIL’s objectives, and discusses the implications for gender balance within future Formed Police Units, and for FPUs’ duties. Finally, it provides recommendations for further research.
Chapter 1. Why Women Can Enhance the Effectiveness of UN Police

1.1 Women and UN Peacekeeping

The subject of women police in peacekeeping operations sits at the intersection of several areas of research and policy. These include sub-state violent conflict, peace operations, peacebuilding activities such as policing and security sector reform, and, as an overarching concern, gender in the context of security. Changes in the types of conflicts attracting peacekeeping interventions, and increasing focus on the processes through which peace operations’ activities succeed or fail make these dynamic fields of work. However, research across all these areas suffers from a shortage of data, stemming partly from the relative novelty of the topics, and lack of consensus as to what data needs to be gathered, and partly from the practical difficulties of gathering information during and after violent conflicts. Analysis of the role of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes is particularly scant, as sex-disaggregated data in many cases has only recently begun to be collected. Although women now fill nearly half the positions in political affairs, legal affairs, and human rights, they make up barely 2% of UN military positions, 8% of UN police, and are conspicuously rare in senior leadership - currently there are two female heads of mission out of 17.6

Developments in UN peacekeeping

The goals, methods and impacts of peacekeeping operations have changed dramatically in the last two decades. UN peacekeeping operations have been forced to respond to the changing nature of violent conflict from interstate warfare to primarily sub-state violence. Such conflicts

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may feature systematic targeting of civilians, and result in a post-conflict environment characterized by ethnic or religious faultlines, hotspots of violence, many displaced people, a collapsed economy and a weak, fragile government whose legitimacy may not be widely accepted. Such situations forced peacekeeping operations to evolve from monitoring peace agreements to “securing the peace process” in order to enable and assist countries build “sustainable peace”.  

The process through which the UN’s focus shifted from the state toward the population, while driven by increasing public concern for human rights and the protection of civilians, was marked by a series of failures. The end of the Cold War made sub-state conflicts more visible while enabling concerted international action, and pressure from increasingly powerful civil society organizations increased states’ readiness to commit resources to peacekeeping operations with humanitarian goals. However, the UN’s inability to protect the vulnerable from ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, genocide in Rwanda, and sexual exploitation and abuse by its own peacekeepers in many missions damaged its reputation.

It also, however, led to increased focus on actors and processes at the sub-state level, and significant change in the UN’s peacekeeping practices. Civilians in countries where peacekeeping missions are deployed are now recognized not just as victims of conflict but as agents in both conflict and peace processes. UN peacekeeping missions have become “complex” or “multidimensional”, with mandates requiring: providing operational support to national security sector institutions; protecting critical infrastructure; protecting civilians; and providing support to reconciliation and reconstruction efforts. Their composition frequently comprises

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robust military component and a large civilian contingent of specialists in policing, human rights, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants, humanitarian assistance, economic development, and institutional reform and reconstruction.9

Women, peace and security

One increasingly influential strand of advocacy during this period was that focusing on the salience of gender to security. Pointing to mass rape of women as a tactic of warfare, the sexual abuse and exploitation of women by peacekeepers, the unrecognized roles played by women and girls in rebel groups, and the informal peace processes launched by women’s networks, civil society groups asserted the importance of disaggregating women’s and men’s experiences and impacts as victims, combatants and peacemakers, and the need for women’s participation in official peace mechanisms such as negotiations and peacekeeping operations to be recognized and encouraged.10 In response, elements of the UN began to promote “gender mainstreaming” – incorporating both women’s and men’s concerns and perspectives into policymaking – and gender balance within peacekeeping agencies and activities.11 Key to these efforts was the passage in 2000 of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which maintained that “an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security”. Among its provisions are calls for increased representation of women at all decision-

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10 For example, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, a major NGO lobbying the UN on behalf of women since 1948 and instrumental in pushing for UNSCR 1325; and, post-2000, the NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security, an umbrella group coordinating 16 major NGOs, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Open Society Institute.
making levels in institutions addressing conflict; expansion of the contribution of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations, especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel; the incorporation of a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations; and special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse.\textsuperscript{12}

UN studies of women and multidimensional peacekeeping missions have found that the inclusion of women in peacekeeping operations brings about the following operational benefits: improved support for the local population, improved behavior of male peacekeepers; expansion of the mission’s skills, approaches and perspectives. A significant female presence may mobilize host country women to increase participation in political processes.\textsuperscript{13} Other studies have cited further benefits: enhanced information-gathering capacity; increased attention to women’s and children’s security; modelling of gender equality; and even a reduction in conflict.\textsuperscript{14}

Women as peacemakers?

These results are diverse, their benefits to civilians unclear and usually unmeasured, and they lack both an explanatory theoretical framework and empirical precision. In the absence of these, the discussion of women and peacekeeping is too often based on, in Benard’s phrase, “anecdotes, \textsuperscript{12} United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325 (2000)), October 31, 2000. http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement (accessed March 29, 2010).
\textsuperscript{14} Hudson, “Mainstreaming Gender.”
suppositions and vaguely anthropological personal theories.”¹⁵ Frequently, advocates of
increased female participation resort to essentialist and stereotypical notions of women as more
compassionate and more peaceable than men. At recent UN workshops on the subject,
participants, including UN military and police peacekeepers, national police representatives and
government officials of both sexes, cited women’s “greater sensitivity”, “attentiveness”, and
“superior listening” among reasons why women benefited peacekeeping operations.¹⁶ Liberian
President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has asserted that women bring “extra sensitivity” and “more
caring” to the security sector – “these are the characteristics that come from being a mother,
taking care of a family, being concerned about children, managing the home.”¹⁷

Security scholars offer more sophisticated interpretations, but many of these also rely on
stereotypes of women’s attributes. Frequently, scholars explain observed differences between the
behavior and attitudes of female and male troops in terms of differences between men and
women, giving little weight to institutional factors such as recruiting and training policies, or
organizational culture. Gerard DeGroot, for example, observing that mixed-sex military
branches in Iraq displayed more restraint and less aggression than men-only combat branches,
argues that women, whether because of biology or socialization, are calmer and more
conciliatory than men, and hence are better at dealing with civilians.¹⁸ Others maintain that
women are not necessarily more conciliatory or caring, but that they are believed to be so,
making female peacekeepers more approachable, more able to defuse tension, and thus more

¹⁵ Cheryl Benard, “Caution Nation-builders: Gender Assumptions Ahead,” The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs
¹⁶ Ryan T. Marks and Tara Denham, A Roundtable on Police and Gendarmerie Women in Peace Operations: West
African Solutions to Gender Mainstreaming Challenges, Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (Ottawa: Pearson
Peacekeeping Centre, November 2006), 17-18.
¹⁸ Gerard J. DeGroot, “A Few Good Women: Gender Stereotypes, the Military, and Peacekeeping,” in Louise
Olsson and Torunna L. Tryggestad (eds.), Women and International Peacekeeping (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 33-
35.
effective. Some, focusing on conflicts where national security forces have committed acts of sexual and gender-based violence against, note that civilians may remain more fearful of male than female military and police peacekeepers. Women will therefore be better at dealing with victims of violence, particularly sexual violence. Against this, Johanna Valenius cites the preference of Eritrean and Ethiopian women for interacting with peacekeepers of similar ethnicity instead of European peacekeepers in the UN Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) to warn against overemphasis on the relevance of gender at the expense of other factors.

Scholars also differ as to how, or even whether, the presence of women in peacekeeping organizations leads to improved male behavior. DeGroot maintains that even “a token [female] presence” has a “civilizing” effect. Better gender balance “means the operation more closely resembles civilian society. Its members are therefore more likely to observe social conventions that define civilized behavior.” Australian and Finnish military peacekeepers have made similar comments about the effect of female participation in their own forces. However, given the diverse societies from which peacekeepers come, the “social conventions that define civilized behavior” are neither universally accepted nor necessarily promoting of gender equality.

Valenius notes that when women constitute a small minority in a peacekeeping unit they often

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prefer to avoid knowing what their colleagues are up to rather than take on the responsibility of “civilizing” their male colleagues.\textsuperscript{25}

Although essentialist views of women thus appear to imply an immediate tactical benefit for peacekeepers, they can also be used in arguments against greater female participation: at the same forum in which women were described as “superior listeners” participants also expressed fear that female peacekeepers would not be “emotionally strong enough”, would not be “hard” enough for the more physically challenging and dangerous aspects of peacekeeping. A more serious drawback to arguments for women’s participation on the basis of “womanly” qualities like compassion and “women’s issues” like sexual violence is that such arguments risk ghettoizing all three. By minimizing their relevance to men in the organization, and by ignoring other importance variables such as ethnicity, training, and institutional context, this ultimately undermines prospects for improved operational effectiveness. The advocates and scholars of women in peacekeeping discussed above have defined compassion, communication, caution in the use of force and commitment to addressing sexual violence as attributes of great value to the peacekeeping mission. However, portraying these qualities primarily as the preserve of women (whether by virtue of their inherent or socialized characteristics) in what remains a male-dominated field makes them less likely to be assimilated into the core values and daily processes of the organization. Similarly, arguing for greater female participation in peacekeeping as a way to combat sexual and gender-based violence against women risks both sidelining such violence from the main concerns of (mostly male) decision-makers, and ignoring sexual and gender-based violence not aimed at women. Charli Carpenter, commenting on the lack of interest among international aid organizations in addressing gender-based violence against men, argues that this absence is self-defeating: “First, men deserve protection against these abuses in their own right.

\textsuperscript{25} Valenius, “A Few Kind Women,” 515.
Second, the reduction of gender-based-violence against women and girls cannot occur without participation from men, nor can their particular vulnerabilities in conflict situations be separated from the forms of violence to which men are specifically vulnerable."

Interestingly, a common argument against deploying women, particularly in the military components of peacekeeping units, is that their presence and roles might be offensive to a host country culture with strictly segregated gender roles. This has not appeared to be true. Kari Karamé cites the UNIFIL force commander who refused to redeploy female troops because they might offend the Muslim and Druze populations of Lebanon. Karamé points out that women soldiers had already served there with no apparent damage to the mission, and that female combatants were present in many of the Lebanese militias. U.S. experiments with “Lioness” teams in Iraq and “Female Engagement Teams” in Afghanistan have so far found that female soldiers elicited curiosity, but also enabled valuable communication with the population.

1.2 The Relevance of Representative Bureaucracy Theory

A more constructive approach to the analysis of women’s impact in peacekeeping operations may come from representative bureaucracy theory. A strand of public policy analysis, it has been used successfully to assess the impact of ethnic minorities and women in national governmental organizations, but it has not yet been applied to intergovernmental organizations or to the field of international security.

Women as representatives

Representative bureaucracy theory is based on the premise that a bureaucracy that is demographically representative of the population will provide services that answer the diverse perspectives and preferences of the public.29 “Passive representation” exists where a bureaucracy’s demographic composition matches that of its constituency. Passive representation thus has a signaling function, indicating to members of the represented group their access to the policy process and thus enhancing their confidence that bureaucrats will recognize and respond to their interests. Passive representation works irrespective of the individual bureaucrat’s values and behavior. “Active representation”, on the other hand, occurs when bureaucrats consciously act on behalf of the groups they demographically represent.30 Active representation is enabled when bureaucrats have the ability to exercise discretion, and thus is dependent on bureaucrats’ attitudes, values and predispositions. “Street-level” bureaucrats – those directly interacting with the public - tend to exercise a high level of discretion, so their attitudes and values are highly relevant to the way they implement policy; moreover, their interaction with the public ensures their association with the results of their decisions.31 While Frederick Mosher’s original conception of passive and active representation regarded the latter as “bureaucratic partiality”, a potentially unfair bias on the part of the bureaucrat, Hong-Hai Lim argues that active representation does not necessarily imply partiality and can be driven instead by a bureaucrat’s having an “empathic understanding” of his or her group. Understanding and/or sharing a group’s values allows bureaucrats to “lead minority bureaucrats to articulate the interests of their social

group as decision inputs and to take these interests into proper account in their own decisions and actions.”

Past studies have shown that female bureaucrats do not necessarily consider themselves representatives specifically for female clients – possibly due to alternative identifications such as their ethnic group, religion or social class. However, Lael Keiser et al argue that institutional and political dynamics can cause female bureaucrats to become advocates of women clients under three conditions: if a policy that a woman bureaucrat administers directly benefits women as a class; if the policy has been defined as gendered by the political process; and if the gender of the bureaucrat fundamentally changes the relationship between the bureaucrat and the client because the relationship is characterized by shared gender-specific experiences. Kenneth Meier and Jill Nicholson-Crotty further note that this third factor may depend on whether the change is made by the client (passive) or by the bureaucrat (active). Thus, in their investigation of police responses to cases of sexual assault, they identify four processes to explain why a higher percentage of women police led to a higher rate of reports of sexual assault and a higher rate of arrests of suspected perpetrators. The first process is a result of passive representation: if a rape victim perceives her police force to have a significant proportion of women police, she may expect the force to take her complaint more seriously, and be more likely to make the first contact with police to report rape. The second process is a passive change in relationship: if dealing with a woman police officer, the victim may be more willing to believe the police officer is on her side and press charges or provide more compelling evidence. The third is an active changed relationship: a female police officer might share the victim’s attitudes on the gravity of

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rape based on shared gender-related experiences, making the officer devote more time and effort to pursuing rape cases. The fourth is active without a relationship change: women police officers could influence the attitudes and behavior of their male colleagues, sensitizing them to the gravity of sexual assault and thus increasing male officers’ support of women victims. Thus, the female bureaucrat and the female member of the public do not necessarily need to interact directly in order for active female representation to occur.34

Representative bureaucracy thus provides a useful framework for analysis of women’s impacts in an organization, because it recognizes the effects of outsiders’ perceptions, effects within the bureaucracy, and the effects of interaction between public and bureaucracy, without recourse to moral judgments or anthropological stereotypes.

Below, slightly different language will be used to discuss Meier and Nicholson-Crotty’s four processes of female representation in the context of UN police peacekeeping in UNMIL. “Passive representation” will still be described in the same way; however, rather than the somewhat cumbersome phrase “change of relationship based on shared gender-related experiences”, the discussion will refer to “empathic interaction”, on the basis that what is changing the relationship between the bureaucrat and the member of the public is an expectation of understanding based on shared characteristics. Rather than characterize such empathy as “passive” or “active”, the discussion will note the effects of empathy felt by host country women versus that felt by female peacekeepers. Active representation made by women police influencing their colleagues and other officials will be described as “advocacy”.

1.3 The Role of the Police in Post-Conflict Situations

The applicability of gender representation to domestic policing suggests the model should also

34 Meier and Nicholson-Crotty, “Gender, Representative Bureaucracy,” 855-858.
be relevant to women in peacekeeping operations, particularly to women in the UN police (UNPOL). Formerly deployed as monitors, UNPOL contingents have seen their roles expand in recent years. In current peacekeeping operations, UNPOL members have two core tasks: reforming or rebuilding the host country’s police force, and providing policing services to the public until the reconstructed force can assume those duties. Policing communities in post-conflict situations is critical to stability, but very difficult. Societies emerging from conflict often suffer higher rates of crime, caused by the lack of employment opportunities for demobilized combatants, returning refugees increasing competition for resources, and the ease of access to weapons and illicit trade. Compounding these problems, countries’ pre-conflict police forces have often been characterized by corruption, dysfunction and criminality, and were frequently implicated in atrocities during the conflict itself. For these reasons, public confidence in the police in the aftermath of conflict is very low. This undermines the ability of UNPOL and the reconstructed police forces to function effectively, as police are highly dependent on the public not just to report crimes but also to identify offenders.

Building up community trust is thus both necessary for and a fundamental part of UNPOL’s provision of police services, which are based on democratic and community policing principles of public consultation and responsiveness. It is also essential to the successful reconstruction of the national police force, which may need not just extensive retraining, but

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36 Ibid., 10.
38 UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, Guidelines for Integrating Gender Perspectives into the work of United Nations Police in Peacekeeping Missions (June 2008), 3-6. http://www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org/PBPS/Library/Guidelines_Gender_into_UNPOL_Work_PK.pdf (accessed April 5, 2010). “Community policing”, which refers to practices of public consultation and responsiveness, is a subset of “democratic policing”, whose key feature is accountability to law and human rights rather than to individual governments. See Bayley, Changing the Guard, 18-23.
entirely new personnel. Greater public trust, particularly among groups previously ignored or abused by the police, increases the number and diversity of applicants, improving the quality of recruits for the new force, and enhancing its representation. This has a feedback effect – better police recruits can then improve public trust.

Peacekeeping police are certainly street-level bureaucrats operating with a high degree of discretion. Being foreign to the country in which they are deployed, peacekeepers are from the start far less representative than national bureaucrats. Foreign male peacekeepers are one further step less representative of the host country women with whom they interact. The inclusion of women in peacekeeping operations increases the operations’ passive gender representativeness. For active gender representation, female peacekeepers would need to consider themselves advocates for host country women. It seems highly likely that female peacekeepers do see themselves as such, given that the advocacy that led to Resolution 1325 and subsequent directives from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), along with the UN’s current focus on women and peacekeeping, has ensured the framing of their participation as a gendered issue aimed at benefiting women as a class. This strongly suggests that Keiser’s conditions for active representation of women by women are met. The UN’s efforts to increase the number of women in peacekeeping operations suggests women in UN police (UNPOL) in particular are highly likely to see themselves in this way.  

Why women police strengthen UNPOL’s effectiveness

Female representation among UN police may have a significant short- and long-term impact. Violent conflicts tend to inflict suffering differently upon each gender. Men and boys are more

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39 The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations has encouraged member states to provide female police, but has only recently formalized a campaign to increase female participation in UN policing. Called “The Power to Empower”, it was launched in May 2009.
likely to be recruited, perhaps forcibly, as combatants. They suffer a higher risk of being killed or injured, often in sex-selective massacres.\textsuperscript{40} Women and girls, on the other hand, are more likely to be displaced, and face a higher risk of rape and sexual exploitation, by enemy forces or men of their rebel group or peacekeepers or members of their refugee camp. Their risk of sexual and domestic violence may remain high or even rise after conflict officially ends.\textsuperscript{41}

UN police, and the reconstructed police forces they help create, need to be able to recognize the gender-differentiated threats of post-conflict environments and to be committed to addressing them. But most of the world’s national police forces— the source of UNPOL members— have a culture of "hypermasculinity", meaning they value physical strength, aggression, competition and dominance. Benson argues that this machismo culture explains why male officers are much more likely than female officers to be involved in hostile confrontations with the public, use excessive force, and engage in corrupt practices.\textsuperscript{42} Such police forces also tend to be poor at responding to sexual and domestic violence.

Meier and Nicholson-Crotty’s processes of representation suggest women in UNPOL can improve policing effectiveness and contribute to a transformation in the policing cultures both of the peacekeeping operation and of the reconstructed host country police force. Passive representation – merely increasing the numbers of women within a deployed UNPOL contingent – may send a powerful signal of change by demonstrating that UNPOL are qualitatively different from the national police force. This effect also carries over to women in the reconstructed police force, whose presence can likewise signal a break with the past. Passive female representation

\textsuperscript{40} Carpenter, “Recognizing Gender-Based Violence,” 88.
may also challenge beliefs that women cannot be police officers, signal greater consideration of women’s security needs, and encourage host country women to engage with the police. In terms of active representation, women in UNPOL may empathize with local women and advocate on their behalf, improving UNPOL’s support for the civilian population and the attention it gives to issues of concern to women. Women in UNPOL may also sensitize their colleagues to the importance of local women’s concerns and to best practices in addressing them, expanding the skills, approaches and perspectives both of UNPOL and reformed police forces.

Nonetheless, it is important to consider whether female representation has the potential for negative side-effects. A fear among scholars of representative bureaucracy was of ‘bureaucratic partiality’ - that bureaucrats would unfairly favor their group at the expense of others. Here, Carpenter’s point about the dangers of too narrow a focus on women applies: female advocacy risks ignoring male concerns and alienating men – both in the public and the police. This can be mitigated by avoiding advocacy based on moralistic and “vaguely anthropological” assertions, and focusing on policies that are based on evidence and benefit men as well. The removal of height requirements for police officers in the United States is an example of a policy change that increased access for both men and women without weakening police effectiveness.

Chapter 2: Women Police in Liberia: the Role of the Indian FPU in UNMIL

There are about 1300 UN police in UNMIL. About 720 are individual civilian police and the rest make up five Formed Police Units (FPUs) from Nigeria, Nepal (two), Jordan and India. The role

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43 Lim, “Representative Bureaucracy,” 194.
of the non-FPU members of UNPOL is to provide the reconstructed Liberia National Police strategic advice and expertise across the full range of police activities, including investigation of organized crime and corrections. The number of women among non-FPU police has hovered between 50 and 100 during UNMIL’s duration, and it is unclear whether they have been concentrated in particular areas of the organization, spread across its functions, or a mixture of the two. The FPUs are cohesive, single-origin units of about 130 officers, specifically trained to respond to volatile situations such as riots or gang activity. Their core tasks include protection of UN personnel and facilities and if directed, high-risk civilians; provision of security support to the Liberia National Police, including joint patrols, show of presence, concurrence in the maintenance of peace and security and promoting confidence-building measures; and capacity building of the LNP. Apart from the Indian FPU, which has contained between 100 and 120 women throughout each of its three year-long rotations, UNMIL’s other FPUs include an average of two women each, in support or medical roles.

This analysis will focus on the Indian female FPU, partly because its unique composition makes it an interesting experiment in UN policing and peacekeeping, and partly because as the most female-dominated element within UNMIL’s police it should show most obviously the impacts of female representation. Also, as an FPU its objectives and actions are more clearly delineated and thus easier to examine than those of UNPOL as a whole.

The following hypotheses will be explored:

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The Indian FPU will demonstrate significant female representation through the following processes: passive representation; empathic interaction with Liberian civilians; advocacy on behalf of Liberian women to colleagues within UNMIL.

Some of the outcomes achieved by the Indian FPU’s actions in Liberia are caused by their female representation and will therefore be different from those achieved by other (male) FPUs;

These outcomes contribute positively to UNPOL’s and UNMIL’s short- and long-term objectives.

The Unit’s passive representation – the extent to which Liberian women see members of the Unit as representative of their interests - depends in large part on the Unit’s visibility and portrayal by others as much as by its members. Its active representation, however, depends on the Unit’s members’ conception of themselves as advocates for Liberian women, and the extent to which they assume that role in their dealings not just with Liberian women but with all the groups with whom they interact. These include Liberians (as civilians, criminals, complainants, and recruits to the Liberian National Police) and members of UNMIL (other FPUs and agencies such as the Office of Gender Affairs). Comparing the Unit’s behavior with that of other FPUs in Liberia should reveal the extent and characteristics of the Unit’s representation.

Through a document and media review, this paper will examine the public presentation of the Indian Unit, in order to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the Unit’s passive representation. This will be followed by examination of the Unit’s intentions, actions and interactions with the Liberian public and the members of the Liberian National Police, and comparison of these with the practices of Liberia’s other FPUs. The practices unique to the Indian FPU will be assessed both for their relevance to the processes of active representation,
and to their influence on the achievement of UNMIL’s objectives.

Most available information on the Indian FPU comes from media reports, of which there are many, particularly from major U.S., British and Indian news sources. Media interest initially sparked by the Unit’s novelty has remained high, boosted by events such as the annual redeployments, and the UN’s campaign to increase the number of women in UNPOL. Press interviews with members of the first, second and third FPUs provide insight into the women’s conceptions of their role and objectives in Liberia, while reports shed light on the Unit’s activities and effects. More in-depth data is drawn from qualitative assessments conducted by UN consultants, peacekeeping training centers, and non-governmental organizations. These analyses, however, tend to examine the Indian Unit with regard to the UN’s efforts in injecting gender considerations into its activities, or through a broader focus on Liberia’s security sector reform. This analysis aims to synthesize those findings to discover how effective the Indian Unit is at female representation and how that affects the Unit’s achievement of its and UNMIL’s objectives.

2.1 The impact of the Indian FPU

The Indian FPU’s role must be regarded within the broader context of UNMIL, itself influenced by developments in Liberia and the support and pressure of donor countries. Any female representation carried out by the Indian FPU could be mediated, amplified or undermined by other actors within UNMIL, Liberia, the UN, the media, and donor countries. The strong support for increased female participation within UNMIL – which had a 10-member strong Office of Gender Affairs mandated to ensure women’s perspectives were incorporated throughout all of UNMIL’s work and successive leaders committed to the issue – was significantly bolstered by
the support of the Government of Liberia under President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Rather than attempt to demarcate the Indian FPU’s impact independent of other actors, the following analysis will situate the FPU in the context of complementary efforts while focusing on those aspects of the FPU’s work for which it alone was responsible.

Liberia’s civil war and the arrival of UNMIL

From the outbreak of armed insurgency in 1989 until the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2003, Liberia suffered protracted civil war, during which an estimated 250,000 people died, and one million – one-third of the population – were displaced.\(^47\) The Liberian security forces, including the Liberian police, were deeply involved in the brutal repression of the population. Police members became looting gangs and death squads. All sides committed atrocities, with sexual violence a central feature of the fighting. It has been estimated that up to one-third of Liberian women were raped during the conflict.\(^48\)

Intervention by the international community began in 1990, with the deployment of a 4000-strong military observer group established by the Economic Community of West African States’ (ECOWAS). A UN Observer Mission (UNOMIL) followed in 1993, and succeeded by 1997 in demobilizing combatants and arranging elections, which saw Charles Taylor elected Liberian President. However, Taylor’s support for rebel groups in Sierra Leone destabilized the region, and renewed fighting broke out in Liberia. Taylor, accused of war crimes and unable to maintain control, fled in July 2003 to Nigeria. In August ECOWAS arranged a ceasefire among government and rebel groups, and oversaw the CPA in Accra, and in September the UN


established UNMIL, at the time the UN’s largest peacekeeping operation with 16,000 peacekeepers.\textsuperscript{49} Elections in 2005 saw Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf become President of Liberia.

Under President Sirleaf-Johnson, Liberia has made progress toward recovery and stability, but the country is still fragile and extremely poor. Liberia’s GDP has been growing, but much of this is due to reconstruction efforts funded by external donors, and unemployment remains at about 80\%.\textsuperscript{50} The same proportion of the population is illiterate, and most of a generation of Liberians have missed out on formal schooling due to violent conflict.\textsuperscript{51} The UN has processed more than 100,000 combatants through its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs, but the lack of jobs for former combatants is a serious source of instability. Crime rates are thought to be high – data collection is inadequate – with rape the most frequently reported offense.\textsuperscript{52} Both UNMIL and President Johnson-Sirleaf have prioritized measures to address the high rates of sexual violence. However, Liberia’s entire security sector remains weak, mistrusted by the public, and vulnerable to corruption. Tensions between the community and the Liberia National Police (LNP) have seen several police stations attacked or burned, and police officers stoned by crowds.\textsuperscript{53}

The key task of UNMIL’s UNPOL component is the reform and reconstruction of the LNP. A secondary but more immediate task is the maintenance of law and order in Liberia until such time that the LNP is judged able to take over. This flows from UNMIL’s authorization from

\begin{itemize}
\item Meharg et al., \textit{Security Sector Reform}, 54.
\end{itemize}
Liberia in monitoring and restructuring the police force of Liberia, consistent with democratic policing, to develop a civilian police training program, and to otherwise assist in the training of civilian police, in cooperation with ECOWAS, international organizations, and interested States”. 54 UNPOL has thus an advisory role, primarily filled by its individual civilian police, and an enforcement role, filled primarily by the FPUs, although the FPUs also have an advisory function. As advisors, UNPOL members plan the development of the LNP, assist the LNP in implementing programs and initiatives, investigate police misconduct, supervise LNP operations, and train new LNP officers.55 As enforcers, UNPOL’s FPUs provide security to critical infrastructure and key personnel, control crowds and deal with riots, and patrol areas of Monrovia. Their members also act as mentors to members of the LNP. A key aspect of this is the LNP/FPU joint foot patrols, which often take place at night, in violent crime hotspots in Monrovia and along border areas vulnerable to illicit trade and the recruitment of mercenaries, including border areas.56

**UNPOL before the arrival of the Indian FPU: 2004-2006**

When UNPOL began its reconstruction of the LNP in 2004, public trust in the Liberian police was minimal – “zero”, as Malan has described it.57 Liberian civilians, scarred by their victimization at the hands of police during the years of conflict, regarded the institution with fear and loathing. UNPOL’s first task in rebuilding the force was thus to implement a vetting program aimed principally at weeding out officers guilty of misconduct during the civil war. The

54 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1509, article 3(n).
program set the new criteria for LNP membership to include: Liberian citizenship, age of 18-35, possession of a complete high school education, and neither a criminal record nor charges pending for war crimes, crimes against humanity or crimes violating international human rights conventions. More than 2,700 members of the former LNP failed these requirements, leaving 900 officers, among whom 55 were women. UNPOL set up a National Police Academy to retrain the existing 900 officers and enough new recruits to reach a force size of 3,500 by 2007. From 2004 to 2007, the academy provided a 29-week basic training course, later extended to 52 weeks.

UNMIL and the Government of Liberia agreed on an initial target of 15% for female recruits into the LNP. This was later raised to 20%. However, UNPOL struggled to overcome two significant obstacles to female recruitment. Liberian women were initially reluctant to join the LNP, due in part to its reputation and part to the widespread perception of policing as a male occupation. Furthermore, many women were ineligible due to their lack of a high school diploma. The first 30 classes of trainee officers contained an average of only four women each, and women made up only 6% of the LNP by January 2007.

From 2005, UNPOL, UNMIL’s Office of Gender Affairs (OGA) and various Liberian ministries worked together to develop a Gender Policy, consisting of a series of initiatives aimed at increasing the number of women in the LNP, and strengthening the force’s responsiveness to Liberian women. The development of a Gender Policy was an important innovation in UN

58 Ibid., 50.
59 Ibid., 59-61.
security sector reform, and has since been highlighted as a model by DPKO. The policy included the creation of a high school equivalency course for female recruits; recruiting techniques targeted at women; training provided to LNP members on gender perspectives, human rights, and addressing sexual and gender-based violence; the creation within the LNP of a Women and Children Unit and a Gender Unit; and the formation of a Network of Women Officers within the LNP. However, these efforts were developed slowly, and had little impact before 2007. For example, some LNP recruits were given training on gender issues from 2005 on, but it was not done consistently, and it took until 2007 for the Academy to systematize its “woman and child protection” training.

The development of the Indian FPU’s activities

The first Indian FPU arrived in Liberia in January 2007. The 125-strong Unit consisted of 103 female officers, including 13 ranking officers, formed in three platoons of 30, and 22 male logistics staff. The officers, drawn from the Rapid Action Force battalions of India’s paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force, were aged between 27 and 45. Some had extensive domestic paramilitary experience, including counter-insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir, and riot control in central India. Many were married with children. The Unit was stationed at a base in Congo Town, a suburb of Monrovia. Considered an experiment by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Indian FPU expected to be deployed for six months. This was later extended for a further six months. Each successive year has seen a new rotation of Indian women, likewise

63 UN DPKO and DFA, Guidelines for Integrating Gender Perspectives, 25.
64 Malan, Security Sector Reform in Liberia, 9.
67 Ibid.
drawn from the CRPF. The tasks the Unit undertook included guarding the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Monrovia, where the President’s office was located, providing security at local events, drug raids, riot control, and carrying out patrols every night with members of the LNP and other UNPOL staff in and around Monrovia. In addition, the UN hoped that the Unit would serve as “an incentive and an attraction” to Liberian women to join the LNP.

Over time the Indian Unit broadened its role beyond these mandated tasks to encompass a wide range of community-focused programs, with particular attention to Liberian women and girls. Interestingly this was not initially the plan. From the very beginning, members of the Indian Unit were highly conscious of the UN’s expectation that their presence would motivate Liberian women to engage with the LNP. But the first deployment saw themselves as role models from a distance, as it were, and they deliberately minimized interaction between themselves and the Liberians. Apart from their duties, the Indians left their base only to attend church or temple. One officer told the BBC that they preferred to remain aloof from the public: “They try hard to be friends with us, but we don't want to. We just do what the job requires, that’s all.”

The Unit’s aloofness may have been driven by a concern not to appear weak. The first Unit commander, Seema Dhundia, had faced doubts of the Unit’s competency, and so put much emphasis on her officers’ toughness, experience and similarity to the male FPUs. After a few months, however, she told a Liberian newspaper that the Unit had been “accepted” by their male

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70 “All female UN squad a success,” BBC.
counterparts in the LNP.\textsuperscript{72} Around this time Dhundia sought also to begin building links with Liberian women’s groups, such as the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia, to improve coordination on responses to sexual violence.\textsuperscript{73}

With their abilities no longer in doubt, the second group of Indian police were able to expand their activities. The second group arrived in January 2008, and were commanded by Rakhi Sahi. Sahi, another CRPF veteran, had before deploying expressed her hope to move into community policing in Liberia,\textsuperscript{74} and she initiated a range of community outreach projects in addition to the Unit’s core jobs. These projects included providing medical services and clean drinking water to the public, arranging for the installation of lighting systems in public areas at night, and adopting Congo Town’s Hebron Orphanage and Victory Chapel School, where Unit members taught female students self-defense, first aid and Indian dance. Sahi told UN press staff she aimed to portray her Unit as “peacekeepers, women soldiers, role models but also as members of the community.”\textsuperscript{75}

The third group of Indian police, who began their deployment in February 2009, continued their predecessors’ initiatives and added their own, which have included computer classes, community-wide trash clean-up days, and education on sexual violence and HIV/AIDS.\textsuperscript{76} Members of the Unit told Global Action they aimed to “inspire” Liberian women, and to help them improve their economic and social conditions, but also to interact with Liberian men and women to “exchange ideas from both cultures”.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Chitra Subramanyam, “Armed To Go,” \textit{India Today}, February 8, 2008.
\textsuperscript{76} Global Action, “Security Sector Reform.”
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
Initiatives in conjunction with other UN actors

Other elements of the UN were also eager to use the Indian Unit in new ways. The Office of the Gender Advisor worked very closely with the Unit on the training of female officers within the LNP, and on the provision of gender awareness training to all new officers. The OGA also coordinated visits by members of the Indian FPU and female military peacekeepers from Nigeria to high schools to promote police and military careers to girls.

2.2 Evidence and Results of Female Representation by the Indian FPU

“We have changed their perceptions, and not just the perceptions of the Liberian women. We have also been able to change the perception of the Liberian men. They feel their women can do much more.” – Third FPU Commander Annie Abraham interviewed by Voice of America, 16 August 2009.

Among the array of the Indian Unit’s actions and interactions, it is possible to distinguish effects resulting from passive representation by the Unit, empathic interaction between Indian and the Liberian women, and advocacy by the Indian women on behalf of the Liberians.

Passive representation of Liberian women by Indian police

The Unit’s passive representation worked primarily through its portrayal by the media, by the UN, and by the Unit itself, as a force operating on behalf of Liberian women. The Unit was thus a symbol and a signal both of state concern for the welfare of Liberian women and of the value of female participation in policing. The Unit’s street presence – foot patrols and security

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79 Cordell, Gender-Related Best Practices, 25.
provision in high-visibility locations and situations - was magnified by its media presence; articles about the Unit appeared through the early months of 2007 in Liberian news outlets The Inquirer, The Analyst, Star Radio, as well as in major international news outlets. The effect on Liberian women was significant and almost immediate: the number of women applying to join the LNP tripled from approximately 120 to 350 in the two months after the arrival of the first FPU. Given the first FPU’s reluctance to engage with the Liberian population this result seems to stem purely from the Unit’s street and media appearances, suggesting that the Unit’s passive representation was highly effective from the start. Moreover, female recruitment numbers remained high. The number of women enrolled at police academy shot up from four per class to 30 per class in 2007 and 100 per class in 2008 and 2009. Women made up 10% of the Liberia National Police by mid-2008, and 13% by mid-2009. These higher percentages cannot be attributed solely to the Indian Unit; other contributing factors include the educational support program for female recruits, and, possibly, growing representation by women within the LNP, as recruits become officers deployed in the community.

**Expecting and enacting empathy – how did Liberians and Indian police interact?**

The commander of the third deployment of Indian police, Annie Abraham, stressed the importance and benefits of enabling woman-to-woman communication between public and police: “For women to come out of this sort of situation, it is important for them to find women

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police on the streets, so they feel comfortable opening themselves up and turning to the police, if
need be.”

In addition to finding women police on the streets, the Indian Unit made it possible for
the Liberian public, as well as their Liberian police trainees, to find women police in a range of
environments, including classrooms and medical facilities. In this respect, the Unit was unique
within UNMIL’s police units. By mid-2009, an assessment for the UN found that none of the
other FPUs had implemented community outreach programs, although some had plans to do so,
and few of their members had had personal interaction with the public. Moreover, this range of
environments, which included informal as well as formal settings, and sustained, regular
relationship-building as well as spontaneous street-based interaction, enabled the Indian police to
develop detailed understanding of their community. The Indian police were “not shy when they
notice[d] changes in the community, approaching women and men they [thought] might be
having a problem at home, should they become absent or withdrawn from activities,” and this
level of communication resulted in their detailed understanding of the “specific and prevalent
challenges” faced by Liberian men and women in their community. The Unit’s behavior also
enabled more open discussions on addressing sexual violence, a serious security threat for
Liberian women and girls.

This level of engagement between Liberians and Indian police had some unexpected as
well as hoped-for results. UNMIL reported that Liberian women were increasingly willing to
report incidents of sexual and domestic violence. Some officials have claimed that the Unit

(accessed April 2, 2010).
85 Cordell, Gender-Related Best Practices, 25.
86 Ibid., 24.
87 Ibid., 25-26
88 Ibid., 24-25.
enabled not only an increase in reporting of sexual assault cases, but also a consequent decrease in incidents. 89 A more surprising outcome was the significant increase in girls’ attendance at the Victory Chapel School. Following the school’s ‘adoption’ by the Indian Unit in 2008, the ratio of female to male pupils climbed to 7:3 - the opposite of the national average.90

A comment by Angeline Paie, a Liberian woman at the market in Congo Town, provides one indication of how Liberian women regarded the Unit: ‘I somehow feel more protected with female police officers patrolling the streets. I feel more at ease addressing a woman, should I have problems … and of course I enjoy seeing women doing what we used to consider ‘man business’. ‘91 Unfortunately, there is very little information on Liberians’ views of the Indian Unit. The increase in sexual assault reporting and female student attendance suggest that the interaction between the Liberian and Indian women was characterized by a high degree of mutual gender-based empathy. The fact that the Indians’ interaction was predominantly with Liberian women and girls rather than equally with both sexes supports this interpretation, as do comments such as this from Indian police officer Poonam Gupta: “When the peacekeeper is a woman herself, she understands them more and they feel more secure talking to her.”92 This interpretation may also undermine the common argument that female peacekeepers are naturally kinder than men by showing that in these cases their kindness was somewhat selective by gender. However, more information on Liberians’ experiences of the Unit, particularly on any

90 Cordell, Gender-Related Best Practices, 25.
differences in treatment and relationship between Liberian men and women, is necessary to resolve this point.

Advocacy – the Indian Unit’s influence on other bureaucrats

The Indian Unit’s work training the LNP has put them in regular contact with Liberian police trainees, other FPUs, and UNMIL staff. Again, there is little available information on the attitudes and actions of these actors, less still on how they viewed the Indian Unit, or whether their behavior changed over the 2007-2009 period. Consequently, it is difficult to make an accurate assessment of the extent to which the Indians’ efforts influenced - or failed to influence - these other actors, and thus impossible to prove that the Unit engaged in active representation.

It seems highly plausible that the Indian Unit provided behavioral modelling and verbal advocacy of a type of policing – professional, featuring female leadership, supportive of close community relations and democratic values – significantly different from the policing models of the wartime LNP, and even the national police forces of the other FPUs. Nigeria’s Unit, for example, came from a police force notable for its brutality and corruption\(^93\). Nepal’s Units are drawn from the Nepalese Armed Police Force, which only started admitting women in 2003.\(^94\)

It is plausible therefore that working with the Unit could have changed attitudes and behaviors among the LNP trainees and UNPOL staff. However, the Unit’s influence on UNMIL’s other FPUs might be minimal. One indication of this is that the other FPUs have not adopted the Indian Unit’s emphasis on community relationship-building. Interviews with members of the four male FPUs revealed that they regard their role and impact primarily in terms of crime rates


for armed robbery and assault, a much more narrow conception than the Indian Unit’s “peacekeepers, women soldiers, role models [and] members of the community”. Possibly their influence may be slowly growing, as evidenced by some FPUs’ plans to begin implementing community programs. However, any changes in FPUs’ attitudes could also be linked to UNMIL training, and the emphasis of UNMIL leadership on gender equality and democratic policing. The Indian Unit may have had a greater impact on policymakers. In 2008, DPKO issued new guidelines for UNPOL highlighting the Unit’s successful inspiration of women to join the national police force and demonstration of women’s equal capacity for robust police work. The guidelines further called for future FPUs to ensure female members engage in – and are seen to engage in – all FPU duties.95 Enthusiasm for the Unit also came from the Government of Liberia, which in 2009 asked the Unit to expand its self-defense classes from students to adults.96

2.3 The Overall Impact on UNMIL’s Objectives

The unique characteristics of the Indian Unit – its female composition and community outreach efforts – risk being seen as dispensable or irrelevant to core police work, unless they produce improvements in security. According to Liberians in Congo Town, the area has become safer, with lower crime rates than other local neighborhoods where FPUs are stationed.97 A Congo Town police chief has credited the Unit with a 65% drop in armed robberies.98 Thus, as well as the Unit’s “feel-good” outcomes – increased female recruitment to the LNP; increased reporting of sexual assault; improved school attendance by girls – the Unit appears also to have proved the

95 UN DPKO and DFS, Guidelines for Integrating Gender Perspectives, 24-27.
96 Lieberman, “Indian female police unit.”
97 Cordell, Gender-Related Best Practices, 23.
98 Carvajal, “A Female Approach to Peacekeeping.”
worth of its approach in hard security terms. It has also contributed substantially to UNPOL’s twin goals of maintaining order and rebuilding a more representative police force.

However, some of these results can be easily questioned. For instance, the claim that the Unit contributed to a decline in sexual assaults is undermined by the dubious accuracy of recorded rates of the crime, which is widely believed to be both under-reported and under-punished even in developed societies. In Liberia, where various forms of sexual abuse are considered normal and where data collection is not systematic, reported rates of sexual assault are particularly unreliable. Inadequate data collection and record-keeping also weaken Congo Town’s apparent drop in crime relative to other FPUs’ areas. The flimsy foundation of these results necessitates more intensive and sustained investigation into the crime and security situations of Congo Town and other FPU- and non-FPU-protected areas, in order to ascertain more precisely the effects of the FPUs. Further research is likewise necessary to establish more firmly how the FPUs’ actions translate into security gains (or lack thereof).

However, if the link holds between the Indian Unit’s actions and its apparent pre-eminence in crime prevention, determining the causal mechanism between the two would provide not just UNMIL but peacekeeping operations in general with an opportunity to substantially improve their effectiveness. This article argues that the Unit’s engagement with Liberian women provided opportunities for trust- and relationship-building between the police and the community. Democratic and community policing prescriptions are built on the belief that improvements in trust and relations will enhance police effectiveness by increasing the public’s willingness to provide the police with information. Although reports suggest that this was happening with regard to crimes of sexual violence, this does not prove that the Unit increased

100 Bayley, Changing the Guard, 74-77.
the willingness of Congo Town residents to report other kinds of crime or security threats, either to them or to the LNP. Further research into the public provision of crime-related information to the Unit and the LNP members it worked with, and comparisons with other FPUs and LNP stations, might answer this question.

Another area demanding more research is the long-term effect of the Unit on the reconstructed LNP. The Unit surely increased female recruitment, but the value of this achievement depends on whether increased female participation measurably improves the LNP’s performance. Currently, the LNP’s performance remains, at a macro level, poor: the police force is weak, under-resourced and inadequately professional, with a presence limited in Monrovia and almost non-existent outside the capital.101 However, more detailed analysis at micro levels – comparing districts, for example, or assessing the performances of units within the organization – may show linkages between female representation and policing successes within the LNP.

**Chapter 3: Implications for Peacekeeping**

The Indian FPU was highly useful to UNMIL, both as a symbol of its support for women, and as an innovative police unit that undertook apparently successful relationship-building initiatives. The unit’s strong female representation led to striking impacts in a wide range of areas, some of them, such as increased female attendance at school, unexpected. Interestingly, the media buzz sparked by the Unit’s novelty, rather than dropping off from a peak at the beginning of the Unit’s deployment, may have created a positive feedback loop: initial media publicity sparked greater female recruitment, which then resulted in more publicity for the Indian Unit, thereby increasing its influence. A result of this positive publicity has been the growth in interest from other

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cuntries: Bangladesh and Nigeria are now creating their own all-female FPUs.  

Is that the correct policy response? Or does this focus on one aspect of the Unit at the expense of other equally important features? There were different benefits arising from what the Unit was, and what it did, leading to a distinction between policy responses that focus on the Unit’s female composition versus those focusing on its actions. The Unit’s female composition enabled female representation both passive and active. The Indian Unit’s choices in community programs were strongly influenced by their consciousness of their role as advocates for Liberian women. This concern, coupled with the high degree of discretion afforded UN peacekeepers, led the Unit to shape its community outreach specifically to target women and girls, a part of the population generally underserved by peacekeepers.

On the other hand, the fact that the Unit engaged in outreach at all should not be tied to its female composition, despite the contrast with UNMIL’s male FPUs. In fact, the male FPUs’ lack of community programs contrasts somewhat strangely with the community engagement done by UNMIL’s (almost entirely male) military peacekeepers. That said, most military community-building efforts tend to be construction projects: of roads, schools, hospitals. In contrast, the Indian Unit’s efforts were based on interaction. This leads to two questions heading in different directions: should the Indian Unit’s composition be replicated by other FPUs? And should the Unit’s interactive community activities become part of UN FPU practice?

Should the Indian Unit’s composition be replicated by other FPUs?

103 For example, Bangladesh’s troops built a vocational skills training center in Gbarnga (Bong County, central Liberia), and instructed students in skills including computer, tailoring, carpentry, electric wiring, welding, and generator repairs and maintenance. UNMIL, “Bangladeshi Peacekeepers Equip Liberians with Essential Nation-Building Skills,” UNMIL Press Release 14, March 3, 2008. http://unmil.org/1article.asp?id=2678&zdoc=1 (accessed April 7, 2010).
A female formed police unit provides a powerful display of female power. The rarity of the phenomenon and its challenge to traditional views of the police as a male or masculine occupation make a female unit something of a spectacle – which can be very useful for the purposes of publicity and strategic communications. The all-female unit also shows that women police can engage in the full range of policing activities, including command positions. Finally, countries whose domestic police services contain a degree of sex segregation, as India’s do, can make a positive contribution to women’s safety and security this way. On the other hand, an all-female police unit may lose the benefits of a mixed unit: the opportunities to model gender equality as collaboration between men and women, to sensitize male colleagues to women’s concerns and perspectives, and the ability to represent both men and women in the public. That said, these opportunities did exist in UNMIL, through the Indian Unit’s work with the (men of the) other FPUs and LNP. Ultimately, the success of the Indian Unit implies that female representation will be more effective when women police are organized in a sizeable group, rather than spread thinly across units.

*Should the Unit’s community activities become part of UN FPU practice?*

Formed police units, with “more muscle” than unarmed UN police, and “more precision” than military troops, are intended to fill the gap in public security provision between foreign military troops and national police. 104 Precisely how they do so, beyond the fairly minimalist directions provided by DPKO, differs not just across operations but among FPUs in the same operation. Whether this level of discretion is desirable or sustainable is far from clear. Certainly, given the variation in societies and security environments a high level of flexibility for UNPOL will remain necessary. However, the benefits of effective community relationship-building activities

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in terms of gaining information and developing trust are too important for such activities to depend entirely on the willingness of individual commanders or units. They need to become part of FPU practice. Military forces have already recognized the operational value of community outreach. “Armed social work”\textsuperscript{105}, a description of military counter-insurgency, can also be a description of post-conflict policing: both aim to persuade a fractured society to support government institutions; both require deep knowledge of the population for success; and both depend on appropriately targeted relationship-building with the local community. In fact, counterinsurgency doctrine also recognizes the value of targeting outreach at host country women: “Co-opting neutral or friendly women, through targeted social and economic programs, builds networks of enlightened self-interest that eventually undermine the insurgents.”\textsuperscript{106} On the other hand, while the Indian Unit’s activities were voluntary and done in their spare time, mandating future FPUs to perform similar activities raises the question of whether they should be provided with more resources – in terms of time, money and training – to do so. More evidence, however, is necessary to justify more resources. This leads back to the need for more detailed research into the results of the Unit’s community programs.

Finally, the strong evidence of both passive and some forms of active representation on the part of the Indian Unit indicates the relevance of representative bureaucracy theory to UN police. An interesting and potentially valuable direction for further investigation would be the extension of the analysis of passive and active female representation across the peacekeeping enterprise and up the peacekeeping policy hierarchy. For instance, what are the effects of female chiefs of mission? What roles do women play within DPKO headquarters and how do they influence peacekeeping policy and practice? How do women’s advocacy groups influence policy? And


\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 7.
what are the implications for how DPKO defines the lessons learned from the Indian Unit experiment? Understanding the processes of female representation within the UN system might also contribute to an understanding of how issues, such as sexual and gender-based violence, become regarded as “women’s issues” within the UN, and how gendering of such issues affects policy decisions.

**Recommendations**

As a case study, the Indian FPU indicates the benefits for peacekeeping missions of female representation. However, a great deal more research is necessary, first to establish more firmly how the Unit’s processes of representation produce results, and secondly to test the results in Liberia against those of other peacekeeping operations.

A key question demanding further investigation is the robustness of the claim that the Indian Unit increased the security of Congo Town. Is Congo Town indeed safer than other areas? If so, can reasons other than the Indian Unit be eliminated? And if so, it would be useful to determine the causal processes by which the Unit produced that outcome. One plausible explanation needing testing is that the Unit encouraged greater information provision from the community, resulting in more effective policing.

Another area of research involves tracking the Indian Unit’s influence across the groups with which it interacted, and over time: Has the Indian Unit influenced any of the other FPUs? What are the long-term effects of the Indian FPU on the LNP? On the community of Congo Town? On UNMIL? Moreover, although none has yet been described, there may be negative effects associated with the Unit’s actions. For instance, did the Unit’s emphasis on Liberian women result in any alienation of Liberian men? Did it create any other potentially destabilizing
dynamics? And if any are found, could they be avoided or mitigated in future cases?

These questions – and their answers – will be of direct relevance to the deployment of future female FPUs, such as those forthcoming from Nigeria and Bangladesh. Moreover, the emergence of other female FPUs will offer researchers an opportunity to compare the effects of other factors, such as the officers’ backgrounds and training, and the missions’ societal and security environments.

The UN is engaged in remaking national police forces to fit a democratic policing ideal that many of its own police may not practice; it faces conflict and post-conflict situations of great complexity; and its resources are continually stretched. The organization cannot afford not to learn from its own experiences. An important element of the Indian Unit’s experience for peacekeepers (and, indeed, any foreign forces arriving in a fragile conflict or post-conflict zone) to note is that building relationships with the community takes time, effort, and skill – not some feminine sort of magic available exclusively or even predominantly to women. The Indian Unit exemplifies two encouraging trends within UN peacekeeping policy: increased experimentation in post-conflict policing; and the growing participation of women. These ought not to progress in parallel but should influence each other. Thus, lessons learned from the Indian Unit should not be relegated only to the gender specialists, but regarded in the context of the broader peacekeeping effort.
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