

# UN FEMALE PEACEKEEPERS: AN ANALYSIS IN TERMS OF THEIR SERVICES

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## Abstract

*UN peacekeepers serve under harsh and dangerous conditions to help and support the most vulnerable people in conflict zones. The UN recognizes the importance of gender responses in peacekeeping engagements. It has expanded the role and contribution of women in peacekeeping and considers their role critical to enhancing overall peace and security. This paper, therefore, aims to study the cost-benefit analysis of the UN peacekeepers in terms of their services. The study is based on qualitative research using Pakistani female peacekeepers as a case study to draw analysis based on informal conversation/interviews with the former female peacekeepers, officers, and trainers. It also examines the current UN peacekeeping training module. This paper argues that the cost and benefits of the peacekeepers should be in line with the services required and concluded that focusing on peacekeeping operations is impractical without proper training and facilitation.*

**Keywords:** Gender, Peacekeeping, Engagement, Training, Female Peacekeepers.

## Introduction

The history of peacekeeping forces goes back to the foundation of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). It was formed in May 1948 when the UN Security Council (UNSC) authorized UN military observers to monitor the Armistice Agreement between Israel and Arab states. Since then, more than one million men and women have served the UN peacekeeping mission. Around 100,000 military, police, and civilian personnel have been currently deployed in 14 peacekeeping operations from 125 countries, including female peacekeepers.<sup>1</sup> Despite their immense capabilities, women's role in stabilizing and rebuilding societies is often being marginalised. Generally, war is associated with men and their masculine power, but the heat of war is felt by women too. The proponents of feminist discourse determine that war and peace are gendered activities.<sup>2</sup> They highlight that women's experiences, responses, needs, and approaches are different in both war and peace.<sup>3</sup> Feminist scholars argue that national and international security agencies and policymakers often ignore women's roles as an agency in peacebuilding.<sup>4</sup> There is a need to incorporate women's roles as peacebuilders<sup>5</sup> in security discourses. Although UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

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recognized women's peacebuilding role in its 2004-assessment, women in conflict zones still have little recognition as a resource and re-constructors of society.<sup>6</sup>

When it comes to promoting peace in conflict zones, UN peacekeeping efforts gain prominence.<sup>7</sup> UN peacekeeping operations revolve around humanitarian aid, military and police support, and civilian rehabilitation. According to chapter 7 of the UN Charter, their main goal is to rehabilitate, reintegrate, and reinforce society. Broadly, all UN peacekeepers follow the principle of consent to maintain the impartiality of peacekeeping forces and zero use of force until their self-defence is threatened. The roles of UN peacekeepers include military observers (without guns) who monitor the ground security environment, formulate mechanisms to control the security breach, and ensure a way forward. They opt for a political and civilian engagement at the national level and advocate with all leading departments. Their larger goal is to ensure that society will manage its affairs smoothly without external assistance once UN forces move out of the mission zone.

Today, the demand for UN peacekeepers is growing with increasing instability and insecurity at the global level. According to UN 2018-statistics, in terms of troops contribution, the top ten peacekeeping countries (ranking-wise) are given in Table 1. It indicates that the number of female peacekeepers is less than male peacekeepers, raising concerns about gender roles and their importance in peacekeeping operations.

**Table-1:** Top Ten Troop Contributors (2018 and 2021)

Country	Male	Female	Total in 2018	In 2021
Ethiopia	7,750	588	8,338	6,052
Bangladesh	6,869	154	7,023	5,905
Rwanda	6,506	309	6,815	5,210
India	6,657	55	6,712	5,124
Pakistan	6,192	26	6,218	4,441
Nepal	5,293	197	5,490	4,985
Indonesia	2,616	83	2,699	2,457
China	-	-	-	2,390
Egypt	3,186	1	3,187	2,164
United Republic of Tanzania	2,468	178	2,646	-
Ghana	2,323	322	2,645	1,851

(Source: statista.com)

The gender aspect of security is crucial to development. It was only due to the promulgation of UNSC Resolution-1325 on Women, Peace, and Security that women's inclusion in the security debate became a necessity.<sup>8</sup> The role of gender in peace and conflict has now become a critical aspect of security studies.<sup>9</sup> Women's rights and understanding women's issues to transform core political and economic uplift have also become important in security-related policymaking.<sup>10</sup> The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) emphasises the inclusion of female peacekeepers in UN missions. It also oversees the deployment of the female-formed police unit. Gender equality has been the main driving force behind international peace and security.<sup>11</sup>

UN report on Resolution-1325 demonstrates that women constitute only one percent of military personnel at senior levels compared to 5 percent civilian police personnel and 12 percent of senior civilian staff serving in peacekeeping operations. These numbers suggest women are seriously under-represented in senior-level positions. However, the UN report also indicates that in the year 2000, women's role as gender advisors in peacekeeping missions increased from 2 to 10 percent. With this, they cannot effectively leverage bureaucratic positions. The subsequent studies undertaken by the UN to enhance the security of vulnerable populations in conflict-prone regions call for more representation of women in planning and execution tiers for various missions' deployment across the globe. The strategic focus of the UN Secretary-General on important areas highlighted during the UNSC meeting on April 11, 2019, calls for enhancing women peacekeepers representation, i.e., from 15 to 35 percent.<sup>12</sup>

Women's role as peacebuilders in conflict and post-conflict contexts is gradually growing, mainly because of evidence-based advocacy. Research shows that gender equality plays a significant role in conflict prevention and that women's involvement in peacebuilding has increased the probability that violence will end by 24 percent. According to an estimate, two billion people live in conflict-affected countries, and women play key roles in sustaining peace. UNSC Resolution-1325 detailing risks women face and their determination to tackle conflicts has gained importance in the gender debate. Potentially that is the core reason behind female peacekeeper inclusion in the UN peace missions. South Asian women have been actively engaged in peacebuilding, but their contributions have not been examined to date. For instance, in 2018, International Alert published a list of seven women peacebuilders without mentioning South Asia's women peacebuilders. Therefore, this research focuses on Pakistani female peacebuilders to understand how they contribute against all odds in the local context.

To reflect on the South Asian region, home to various conflicts, women are direct victims and perpetrators.<sup>13</sup> Martinez argues that women's role in Nepal directly demonstrates their potential to secure themselves, eventually leading to an internally stuck phenomenon. Martinez further argues that Nepalese women help or support men in agriculture and generate taxes for Maoist-controlled guerrilla zones.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the social impact of conflicts is more oblivious in South Asia, where women head households and widows are further pushed under the heavy responsibility of maintaining their family welfare.<sup>15</sup> In these societies, women, particularly widows, are culturally regarded with prejudices, and an alone woman invites predatory behaviour, which is common. There are very few internationally supported reconstructions programmes that seriously consider women's role. Though the UN commitment and its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) highlight the actual situation of women in post-conflict regions, the non-inclusion of women in security discourse is a huge gap that can be bridged merely by including women.

## UN Peacekeeping History

The UN plays the role of guarantor for international peace and security in conflict zones. During the Cold War era, to deal with protracted and volatile conflicts with more complex war requirements, DPKO was established. Herewith, a shift from traditional inter-state conflict to protracted intra-state conflict emerged. The US-USSR Cold War rivalry led to many regional competitions. At that time, the UN's role in international security remained restricted to contain war only. The end of the Cold War brought along a lot to several protracted conflicts; some of them were escalated, such as killings in Cambodia, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the collapse of Somalia, genocide in Rwanda and Burundi, etc. Thus, set security, peace, and development challenges for the international community and the UN to deal with them. According to article 1 of the UN Charter, to maintain international peace and security, effective collective measures are required to prevent and remove threats by peaceful means in conformity with the principles of justice and international law.<sup>16</sup>

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General, pointed out that the Cold War and bloc politics (as a consequence) made it extremely difficult and impossible for the UN to implement its Charter, especially in the area of peace and security.<sup>17</sup> The historical timeline of UN peacekeeping came into existence when UNSC became paralyzed during cold war rivalries. Its initial requirement was to resolve conflict through peaceful means and provide support and stabilize the ground situation. The first two missions were UNTSO and UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). UN Emergency Force (UNEF) is the first armed peacekeeping force deployed in 1956 to address the Suez Crisis. In 1960, UN Operation in Congo (ONUC) was launched as the first large-scale UN peacekeeping operation having nearly 20,000 military personnel. Around 250 UN peacekeepers died in this mission while bringing peace and stability to Congo. In 1960 and 1970, short-term missions were deployed in the Dominican Republic, West New Guinea, and Yemen, while long-term deployment was in Cyprus and the Middle East.<sup>18</sup>

The post-Cold War era led the UN from traditional security to armed peacekeeping operations and missions.<sup>19</sup> Most of the tasks were toothless. Although the military remained at the heart of peacekeeping operations, administrators, economists, police officers, legal experts, human rights observers, humanitarian workers, etc., play their due role in the mission areas. From 1984 to 1994, there was a rapid increase in UN peacekeeping operations.<sup>20</sup> With that, the number of peacekeepers also increased from 11,000 to 75,000. The famous deployments were in Angola (UNAVEM), Cambodia (UNTAC), El Salvador (ONUSAL), Mozambique (ONUMOZ, and Namibia (UNTAG).<sup>21</sup> These deployments were made to implement a complex peace agreement, stabilize the security environment, reorganise their military and police departments, install new governments and build democratic systems in the conflict zones.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century came along with its challenges for UN peacekeepers. The UN peacekeeping missions faced severe crises in the mid-1990s, such as a lack of resources

and robust mandate.<sup>22</sup> In Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Somalia, the UN troops were tested when guns were not down; hence, they could not keep peace in these mission areas. At that time, the UN had to reassess its measures to avoid such failures in the future. They had to come across more complex missions in Kosovo, East Timor, Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Syria, Haiti, Timor-Leste, etc. Currently, more than 110,000 military, police, and civilian staff are deployed in 14 countries at various UN peacekeeping missions to achieve the larger goal of the UN peacekeeping operations. It includes facilitating the political process in mission areas, protecting civilians, helping/supporting in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants, assisting in the organization elections, protecting human rights, and helping in restoring the rule of law.<sup>23</sup> The UN aims to place police peacekeepers to maintain law and order in the mission zones.<sup>24</sup> The UN emphasises policing rather than the military to protect civilians and incorporates a multidimensional approach that includes humanitarian aid considering social conditions and various factors.

### **Pakistan's Peacekeeping Contributions**

Pakistan has been contributing to UN peacekeeping missions since 1948 to date. According to official statistics, Pakistan has contributed more than 200,000 troops in 28 countries on almost all continents. The diversity of peacekeepers in various geographical, cultural, political, and security conditions is the commitment.<sup>25</sup> Pakistan has been one of the most significant troop contributors for many years. Pakistan's troops deliver their level best in various peacekeeping operations for sustainable peace, such as confidence-building measures, power-sharing arrangements, electoral support, strengthening the rule of law, economic and social development, or protecting civilians in war-ravaged lands. The men and women of the Pakistan Army have risen above all expectations and served humanity.

Pakistan participated in UN Stabilization Mission in Congo (MONUSCO). It has contributed over fifty thousand troops.<sup>26</sup> According to the Pakistan Peacekeeping Department (PPD), Pakistan participated in 46 UN peacekeeping missions in around 28 countries. Currently, nine contingents are performing their duties in 14 UN missions across the globe. Recently, the largest contingent has deployed in DR Congo. Pakistan has deployed troops in infantry battalions, aviation units, engineer companies, level-II hospitals, and field supervision, including military and police. The equipment footprint is helicopters, military vehicles, and medics. Around 158 Pakistani peacekeepers have sacrificed their lives for maintaining global peace. Pakistan is equally taking the responsibility of pre-mission arrangements, including mandatory peacekeeping courses, such as the UN Contingent Commander course, UN Military Observer course, UN Staff Officers course, UN Protection of Civilian course, UN Police Officers Training course, UN Gender Advisor course, UN Female Engagement course, etc.<sup>27</sup> Pakistan has actively contributed to 17 UN manuals on peacekeeping.

Pakistan provides UN integrated training platforms, such as the Centre for International Peace and Security (CIPS), where participants undergo multidimensional activities as per training modules based on UN peacekeeping mission, UN legal framework, Human Rights Law, and Humanitarian Law. The training modules pay special attention to respect for diversity as the UN peacekeepers come from diverse backgrounds and land in different environments. They learn to deal with foreign media, unfamiliar cultures, strange environmental issues, and health and stress management. Gender, Peace, and Security are discussed at length to understand the importance of the roles of female peacekeepers in the mission areas, especially in dealing with sexual violence and exploitation on the ground. The peacekeepers' conduct and discipline regarding their accountability to human rights violations remain.

### **Pakistan Female Peacekeepers' Engagements**

Several studies undertaken by the UN to enhance the security of vulnerable populations in conflict-prone regions call for more representation of women in the planning and execution tiers. While improving female peacekeepers' representation in the operations, the focus remains on recruitment and training of potential peacekeepers, global communication and outreach, leadership and accountability at all levels, and creating enabling environment for gender parity. Female peacekeepers have added importance to keeping pace with the emerging deployment requirements in line with the resolve reflected at all tiers. Female Engagement Team (FET) is another dimension wherein female peacekeepers are trained and deployed to access areas and parts of the population, usually closed off to men. That affords them the presence among communities, which can help provide insight into core areas and offer opportunities to address gender-specific and women empowerment-related issues. The prime objective identified for the female peacekeepers when interacting with the vulnerable masses is to act as a focal person on the issues concerning women and children while contributing towards Trust and Confidence Building Measures (TCBM) in the mission areas. They frequently interact with volunteer populations, including women and children, for identification, registering, and seeking to minimize their needs.

Besides, female peacekeepers interact and establish liaisons with UN agencies and organizations working on women, gender, human rights, child protection, UNICEF, etc. The larger aim behind their engagement is to remain abreast with the evolving risks, render assistance in related activities, and offer services in the Quick Impact Project in the contingent area of responsibility. They map human terrain, compile data on gender-specific volunteer segments, communicate to command to meet the challenges, and identify volunteers in conflict zones for immediate redressers. They form part of investigative processes; they plan, coordinate and conduct outreach activities by visits and interaction to update situational data on refugees, IDPs, and up-rooted or isolated vulnerable families.

For a successful outcome of tasks assigned to FETs, Pakistani female peacekeepers are trained to understand the functioning of the UN, its legal framework,

nature of the mission, human rights, gender advisory, etc. Pakistan emphasizes broadening its female peacekeepers' professional understanding (working to eliminate threats to the vulnerable populations) by sharpening their skills and techniques to handle the diversified tasks. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) helps develop a better understanding of UN civil-military coordination (CIMIC) activities. UN female representative focuses on the subject related to Women, Peace, and Security. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) are possible employment fields where female peacekeepers interact with conflict-affected communities and coordinate different aspects with various stakeholders.

Pakistan has deployed more than 400 female peacekeepers to date, who have performed exceptionally well in UN mission areas; their services have worldwide acknowledgment. These lady officers have been a source of motivation for the female gender in conflict-ridden regions across Africa. Their interaction and services as community advisors are always praiseworthy, earning a good name individually and for the entire Pakistani nation. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the data of Pakistani female peacekeepers.

**Table-2: Female Deployment – UN**

UN Mission	Deployed with UN Contingents	Military Observers	Staff Officers	Total
MONUSCO	102	21	29	152
MINUSCA	114	17	14	145
UNAMID	42	10	12	64
UNMISS	-	7	13	20
UNFICYP	-	5	10	15
MINURSO	-	7	6	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>409</b>

(Source: CIPS)

**Table-3: Current Female Deployment – UN**

Serial	UN Mission	Deployed with UN Contingents	Military Observers	Staff Officers	Total
1	MONUSCO	32	-	9	41
2	MINUSCA	16	-	4	20
3	UNAMID	11	-	3	14
4	UNMISS	-	-	5	5
5	UNFICYP	-	-	2	2
6	MINURSO	-	2	-	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>84</b>

(Source: CIPS)

## Challenges for Female Peacekeepers

Incentive-wise, UN female peacekeepers have no extraordinary benefits; just getting double salary is inconsequential in the peacekeeping missions at the cost of services required. There is no incentive for promotion, whereas the UN requires maximum female engagement in the operations. Female peacekeepers come from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds with varied social contours. Although they represent their country and meet the UN requirements, living and operating in a protected environment is simultaneously a privilege and a risk. The price paid for their services in the mission zone needs to be improved and incentivized.

The UN female peacekeepers perform office work regarding staff duties and female interventions to a certain extent. They work along and engage with the civilian arrangements and bring success to the mission. Female peacekeepers can easily handle the sensitisation of vulnerable society, whereas male peacekeepers handle hardcore interventions. But when the UN demands robust structures, they need to propose a logical proportion from male to female peacekeepers. Since the UN requires more female peacekeepers, they need to pay as much as they deserve. They should be compensated adequately. They incur far more costs in being away from parents, husbands, children, friends and living in a hostile environment. UN peacekeeping domain has regular donors funding; therefore, peacekeeping missions should not rely on resources but efficiency, rapid deployment capability, and a superior technical advantage over the spoilers.

## Conclusion

The UN should reflect on its existing policies and mandate regarding peacekeeping training and its on-ground process within the current security environment. Hybrid operations have contiguous political and financial advantages; hence the UN can reflect on its existing operations and incorporate e-hybrid functions in the required regions. They cannot apply the same mandate forever. Besides, the UN peacekeeping resolve needs to be revisited based on the asymmetric threats. This paper concludes that the cost-benefit analysis of the UN female peacekeepers is an unfair business that needs special attention. The services provided by female peacekeepers and their compensation portray a dismal picture compared to their sacrifices. Therefore, if the UN wants to encourage more female participation in peacekeeping operations, they should be incentivised significantly.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Note: All UN Peacekeeping related facts and figures are taken from the Official UN Peacekeeping Department Website. The Pakistan's Peacekeeping Training modules related information is collected from CIPS, NUST. All Government related data is collected from the Army and Government and Pakistan Official websites. The following websites are frequently used for accessing data: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/pakistan> <https://www.pakistanarmy.gov.pk/> <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-peacekeeping-70-years-of-service-sacrifice>.
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- <sup>24</sup> Based on informal conversation with the UN Peacekeeping Trainers.
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- <sup>26</sup> Pakistan Army, available at <https://www.pakistanarmy.gov.pk/UN-Mission-Democratic-Republic-Congo.php>.
- <sup>27</sup> All data in this section is taken from the Center for International Peace and Security (CIPS) NUST.