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**‘We Have to Do All the Pushing’:
UN Gender Adviser Strategies for
Implementing Gender Mainstreaming
Policy in Peacekeeping Missions**

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‘We Have to Do All the Pushing’: UN Gender Adviser Strategies for Implementing Gender Mainstreaming Policy in Peacekeeping Missions

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Colleen Keaney-Mischel: The talk I am going to give today is based on two of the data chapters of my dissertation. The dissertation investigates the role of the UN Gender Advisers in implementing peacekeeping policy in UN peacekeeping missions. I decided to focus only on the full-time Gender Advisers (GAs) in peacekeeping operations; there are ten of them currently, and I was able to interview nine of them. I supplemented those interviews by talking to members of other UN missions, Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) staff, and NGO workers who have been working alongside some of the UN missions, for a total of 18 in-depth interviews. That is the data I am working with.

I started to focus on the Gender Advisers when I realized that of all the UN and non-UN assessments of mainstreaming gender in peacekeeping, none were really paying attention to the GAs and their role in the process. This was surprising to me, because as far as I am concerned, they really act as a bridge between the policy that is coming out of headquarters and what is actually going on in-mission. They are advisers to the people in the mission. I thought I should start paying attention to what they are doing and what their role is in mainstreaming gender in the missions. What this allowed me to do is to see the diversity of approaches these women are taking to implementing gender mainstreaming policy; a lot depends on the context they are working in, and on their individual ideas about how they should go about doing it. This approach also brought to light many of the factors that are constraining their choices. You hear things you would otherwise not think about if you did not have a conversation with the Gender Advisers, and you also hear how they are trying to overcome those constraints. This gives you a better idea of what is going on in the missions and why there are certain successes and failures.

The overarching question for my first data chapter was, “What are the strategies being used by Gender Advisers to implement the UN’s gender mainstreaming policies?” (Later in the talk I will address the confusion between the terms “women” and “gender” that exists in the missions and the impact of this lack of clarity). My other questions were, “How do the Gender Advisers interpret their role in the mission?” and “How do they negotiate their relative lack of power in the mission?” (These missions are very masculinized and militarized environments.) I am interested to see the creative solutions they come up with to work within that environment. A final question was, “How do their actions fit within the larger UN agenda – what role do they anticipate these Gender Advisers playing?”

To further set the context, I would like to highlight some of the major benefits of gender mainstreaming policy. First, several studies have indicated that populations are more likely to achieve a sustainable peace if gender mainstreaming is implemented. Populations are more likely to have women involved in their peace and political processes and to have

lower rates of sexual and gender-based violence. Women are also more likely to report cases if they do occur. Studies have also found that with gender mainstreaming there is likely to be a greater number of women in the mission itself, either as peacekeepers or non-military personnel, which is important for building trust within a population. Since there are obvious benefits to gender mainstreaming, and this list is not exhaustive, why is it not happening? We have gone over some of the reasons in previous discussions with Carol Cohn: the lack of political will in headquarters and the missions themselves; and the lack of conceptual understanding of what “gender” means and how to apply a gender perspective; a lack of resources (“How do I apply a gender perspective? What does it mean? How am I supposed to be doing this?”). There is also a fundamental, a lack of resources – financial, human, and material; they either just don’t exist, or they are not made available for the Gender Units and the Gender Advisers. There is also just a marginalization of women and gender issues; they are seen as threatening, and a little political, so people tend to want to stay away from them.

With that introduction and background, I would like to talk about the Gender Adviser’s job, the Advisers’ perceptions of their roles within the missions, and the strategies they employ. I’ll also highlight a couple of points from the literature on gender mainstreaming, and then finish with some thoughts about where UN gender mainstreaming is headed and what part the Gender Advisers have in that.

Gender Advisers have been slowly incorporated into UN missions since about 2000. They started out in places like East Timor, Kosovo, Bosnia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), but they were deployed on an ad hoc basis. There was nothing systematic about it, and there was no mechanism in place to automatically send a Gender Adviser when a mission began. The GAs in the field are supported by a Senior Gender Adviser at the DPKO headquarters (HQ) in New York, who has been there since 2004. As we learned in Carol’s talk, getting the Senior Gender Adviser position in New York was not an easy process. It took about four years to get the position funded, and then it wound up being two ranks below what was requested. She does not have a lot of clout, support or experience. The Gender Advisers themselves say that things have really improved since Comfort Lamptey became the Senior Gender Adviser of DPKO, but certainly there is still a lot of progress that needs to be made.

One of the Gender Advisers described their role as being catalysts. They are there to help everyone else mainstream gender. Gender mainstreaming is not the sole responsibility of the Gender Advisers, despite the misconception held by a lot of people. Gender Advisers are instead meant to act in an advisory, facilitative, supportive role for the other members of the mission, and to help *others* to mainstream gender in their particular units, sectors, or whatever activities or responsibilities that they have. The Gender Advisers take a two-pronged approach, working both internally and externally. Internally, they work on gender issues such as increasing the number of female peacekeepers, or spending time on gender training. They spend *a lot* of time on gender training. In fact one NGO worker said to me, “I don’t think they do anything but the gender training. That is all I see them doing.” Externally, they work with governmental or local partners on activities such as engendering elections, engendering new laws and legislation, or addressing sexual or gender-based violence.

To give you a brief snapshot of who these Gender Advisers are, I have demographic information on seven of the ten. There are men in the Gender Units, but currently all of the Gender Advisers are women. Most are between 46 and 55 years of age (four out of seven). Six out of seven of them have a Master's degree; two have completed some sort of doctoral work. Their national identity was evenly split between Africa and Europe (one person did not respond, so that left three and three). They were also evenly split on racial identity. Three identified themselves as black, three as white. Religion was a mixed bag. Some said they were Christian, one said she was "Chrislum"- raised Christian, but her husband was Muslim, one "follower of the goddess." Three out of the seven identified as having no religion. It is hard to find any specific patterns within this picture.

Regarding their role in the mission – all of them thought they were doing very important work. I could really sense the pride they had in their accomplishments. They are really working hard and believe in what they are doing, however they also overwhelmingly felt that the rest of the mission did not necessarily share the positive assessment of their job and the value of their position. So they felt they spent a lot of time trying to convince others of the value of their role, what they were doing there, and what Gender Advisers could add. This was especially the case if the GA had arrived after the mission had already begun. They did a lot of catch up work. One Adviser told me that when she asked the Director of the Electoral Division in the mission if she could have gender disaggregated data to gain a sense of how many women were registered, he said he did not have it because it was "a question of priority of priorities." She said, "What do you mean? You just don't have it for me because on your priority list I am down on the bottom?!" So these are the kind of responses they get from others within the mission when seeking such things as gender disaggregated data, which would obviously assist the GAs in doing their job. Also, several mentioned to me that the only thing perceived to be of importance in the mission was the military. As one said, "So it's like, it's a little thing; it hasn't got to do with troops, it hasn't got to do with the military, it hasn't got to do with the fighting, and therefore, it's not important." So they all really felt that gender was on the bottom of everybody's list of priorities.

Not surprisingly, most felt isolated in the mission, independent of their physical location in the mission. There were recommendations made to locate the Gender Advisers and the Gender Units in the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the head of the mission, thinking that this would integrate them more and allow them to play an active role in the mission. Even though some of the Gender Advisers were in fact moved, they still feel that, in general, it is very difficult to be heard, although the particular personality of the senior level managers makes a big difference. One Adviser told me that despite the fact she was the head of the Gender Unit, she was excluded from the senior management meetings. The other staff did not let her know the meetings were taking place, when in fact she was supposed to be there. As a result, she was not able to attend and offer a gender perspective on what was happening in the mission. She told me, "At the very beginning, I had a very reluctant Head of Mission to this approach. I mean, he didn't support me absolutely at all. I was isolated physically because I had my office very far from the headquarters; I didn't participate in any meetings. In fact, senior management didn't advise me of any management meetings, so it was very bad."

The sense I got was that the Gender Units themselves were really underutilized resources in the mission. The Gender Advisers feel that they are either lonely or frustrated by the “lip-service” they were being paid. One of the Gender Advisers said to me, “Most of the time you’re just out of the loop. Nobody tells us what is going on. We really have to fight to be included in the regular activities of the mission.”

One of the major concerns I heard across the board was how the lack of support, resources and staff in their Gender Unit really impeded their efforts to mainstream gender. Most of the Units themselves were quite small. Some were very under-staffed and it was really difficult for me to get some of these interviews because of their workloads. At least three Gender Units that I am aware of were requesting additional staff. I asked one of the GAs to tell me about her staff. She said, “It’s just me! I’m it – I am the staff!” Some discussed how they couldn’t do projects because they did not have enough staff.

You may also be surprised to find out, as I was, that Gender Advisers do not have a budget. They are not part of the mission budget, so they have to spend a lot of time raising funds from external donors or specific countries. In some cases, the Gender Adviser at DPKO helps, but the GAs still have to spend a lot of time on fundraising. Operating without a budget also makes it difficult to plan your activities. If you do not know where your funds are coming from, or if they are coming at all, then how can you really plan ahead for things that you have to do? Another point I found interesting was that they said they did not have a lot of travel funds. I did not think it was that big a deal at first, but then they said, “We cannot serve the populations outside the capital. They are really being neglected, not only by us, but by other members of the mission, but in particular by us because we cannot get out there because we do not have the funds to get out to the rural communities.” So there really was a palpable level of frustration, understandably. I can’t tell you how many times I heard the term ‘lip-service’ being used to describe the lack of attention they received from the other units within the missions.

So, in light of this reality, I wanted to know, what are they doing? How are they getting around this? What are they doing to be able to still do their jobs and to try to mainstream gender? One of the first strategies that came up was the idea of “moving from the outside-in.” The strategy entails showing mission personnel what it means to mainstream gender by using concrete examples from the work the GA is doing with the local population. This is where the ‘two-pronged approach’ has really worked for the Gender Advisers. They would do their particular work within the population and show the people in the mission that, “This is what it means to integrate gender.” Importantly, they would use it to show, “This is the cost of ignoring gender; this is what happens when we do not integrate gender.” One of the Advisers said, “I really emphasize that. I really think that it is important that you show the negative sense of not mainstreaming gender.” She talked about how her work training female political candidates in the population had a real impact on the members of the mission. She went on to say that, “Nobody understands gender mainstreaming within the peacekeeping missions. But once they see concrete results, something they can understand on a daily basis, it makes a big difference, so maybe we should revise our own strategy and put a lot of emphasis on the work we are

doing *outside* and trying to use that work to implement our strategy *within* the mission.”

Another Gender Adviser emphasized that she always includes the cultural context in any training she does with mission personnel or with members of the local population. She does this to build an understanding of how the cultural context impacts the post-conflict roles, experiences and responsibilities of men and women in the local population. This makes it a little bit more accessible for the people when they think about the context they are working in. So this idea of “moving from the outside-in,” that is doing the work with the population and showing it to the mission personnel, seemed to be a strategy that a lot of the GAs thought worked very well.

Another idea I heard frequently is that of using human rights as an entrée, especially in their work with the population, so that this was less threatening. They were always talking about how they were trying to mitigate the threat that gender posed. One of them told me that when she runs a workshop, she'll go through a progression of questions about human rights: Who has human rights? Everybody has human rights. Do women? Of course they do. Why don't they access them at the same level as men? Is it tradition, the culture? So there was this backdoor strategy that she was using to get them to think about universal rights, and then talk about the differences that men and women were having in realizing those rights and the reasons behind that.

Questions and Discussion

Q: Do they find it is important to collaborate with human rights organizations in this regard?

CKM: That is a good question. They didn't talk about that actually. I think there was a natural alliance between Humanitarian Affairs in the missions and the local human rights organizations; it is certainly much more of an alliance than they have with the DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) people or the security people (such as the civilian police). I don't know if the local organizations have run workshops with Human Rights.

So, the idea that using human rights as an entrée to start talking about gender as a little less threatening was popular.

Q: Just to clarify, you are saying that they use a human rights framework to work with the community, rather than the mission?

CKM: Yes, in the examples that they gave to me, their work was more often than not with the population.

Another really popular strategy was the use of men in the Gender Units. At least six of the nine Gender Advisers told me that they really seek out men. They found them very beneficial, and several Units had male staff members. Obviously men offer a different perspective, a different dimension to the training. They have different experiences upon

which to draw, and this offers the Gender Units more credibility. There was an instance where one of the Gender Advisers said that her male staff member had done a gender training for the members of the military contingent. Someone came up to him afterwards and said, "It is nice to hear 'a real man' talking about this, instead of the woman from the Gender Unit." So the men were really perceived as more credible than the women who were coming in, unfortunately. But the reality is that the Gender Advisers have said, "Well, if that is what it takes, then I am going to use them where I can."

Another strategy that came up in conversation was the idea of 'independent prioritization.' By that I mean that some of the Gender Advisers were making their own decisions about what projects or initiatives they were going to work on, regardless of what was being mandated by the UN, DPKO, or by the mission mandate itself. For example, one Adviser decided that she was actually going to put more effort into working on issues of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), than into implementing recent DPKO policies around sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by peacekeepers (which were a result of the scandal over the past year around peacekeepers sexually assaulting members of the population). She said, "SGBV is where I am going to focus my time and effort, because it is the bigger problem, this is what I am hearing people in the community talk about, violence they are experiencing from other members of the community, not necessarily the peacekeepers." She explained to me that she thought SEA was a political issue from the UN and not necessarily something that was responding to the needs of the population in her particular mission. She was one of my first interviewees, and I thought, "Wow, she is gutsy." I asked her what she thought of the Prince Zeid report that came out about a year ago, which outlined recommendations for the UN to address the sexual exploitation scandal that was going on. She said, "I don't think about it. I read it because I have to, but it really does not determine how I operate on a daily basis."

I found this fascinating. That had never occurred to me because at the time, everything coming out of the UN was saying "We are really working on this, we are really getting a handle on it." The other Advisers agreed; they felt there were way too many resources being spent on SEA and that it was really just a public relations issue for the UN. They are really trying appear as though they are doing something, but it is less about serving the population, or really caring about what is going on within the population, than it is about saving face for the UN. I think this is incredibly interesting and, like I said, a little gutsy. This is not to say that they were not working on SEA if it came up, but that they were really paying attention and listening to the population, finding out what the greater need was.

In the same vein, another Gender Adviser told me that she thought they really needed to be more reasonable about the Secretary-General's Zero-Tolerance policy about sexual relations within the mission, which again surprised me. She said, "You know in these mission environments, something like this Zero-Tolerance policy is really improbable and really unenforceable. How are going to go about doing that? First of all, how do you enforce it? And then if you do," – and this is what I found really interesting – "it is a non-fraternization policy, and they are seen as an occupying force within the country, and this has negative repercussions in terms of what the UN can accomplish." A couple of Gender

Advisers, indeed, said, “We [the UN] really do not have a good relationship with the members of the local population, and it makes it very difficult to do what we are here to do.” She said that you have to intervene if the relationships are obviously exploitative, but at the same time, there are some really grey areas in the mission and in the policy itself. So that’s another example of ‘independent prioritization,’ where Gender Advisers themselves are taking the lead and using their own judgments to determine what they were going to work on.

Finally, there were some more obvious, practical strategies that they all seemed to use in order to just get by on a daily basis. Humor was one of them. When I was transcribing these interviews, I can not tell you how many times I wrote in parenthesis “(laughs).” These poor women are talking about how difficult it is, but then they would laugh about it. It’s not that they were not taking it seriously, but it was a way for them to diffuse what is an incredibly disempowering and frustrating situation for them.

Q: Do the GAs in different countries ever converse with one another?

CKM: Actually sometimes I would end by saying, “Is there anyone else you think I should be in touch with?” Especially in Africa, where there are quite a few missions, I would hear, “Oh, you know my colleague in Sierra Leone?” A couple of times somebody introduced someone to me and I talked to them, but it seems Africa was where most conversation was going on between the missions themselves. So I don’t know if they are in touch on a regular basis. It seems that they communicate more with Comfort Lamptey at DPKO than they do regularly with one another. But I don’t know about that.

Back to the practical strategies GAs use to do their jobs, I was talking about humor, but there was also the importance of being flexible. They felt a GA really needed to meet people at their level, where that person was in his/her understanding of gender and gender mainstreaming policy. So they talked about using a ‘gender friendly’ approach and some of them explained how important it was to catch people in the mission, to talk to them in a really friendly, non-confrontational, informal manner, like “Lets get a drink...” and then speak about why gender matters.

Finally, they talked about repetition as a strategy. They just needed to reiterate the points they were making in these informal conversations, in the trainings, and in the workshops over and over and over again.

So, what can we take away from this data, from what they were saying? It seems that the most promising strategy, albeit initially counterintuitive, is the ‘outside-in’ strategy, of GAs working with the local population and showing the results to the mission. One Adviser told me that she sees results more quickly with the population, and that it is a more long-term process in the mission. The policy comes out of UN headquarters, so one would think that the mission is going to be up on it, and that it would take a bit longer to get the *local population* on board with it, but it turns out that the opposite is true. Perhaps these initiatives with the population are more successful because they have more to gain. One Adviser described an example of real attitude change: “We have been very bold talking about violence generally. Like domestic violence, rape, sexual exploitation. We

used to have weekly [radio] programs on violence and sometimes we used to open the lines for phone-in and one man phoned in and said, 'You know what? I really didn't know that hitting my wife is wrong.' So, you know, I think that this is one good thing about the mission, you know, it can shift people's perceptions." Perhaps there is more at stake for those among the local population, or maybe gender is more salient because they are coming out of a conflict and are experiencing all sorts of social upheaval, whereas the members of the mission are having a relatively stable experience in comparison, and not necessarily looking for innovative solutions. Unfortunately, in my conversations with NGO workers, and some UN mission staff as well, they said UN workers are not always the most motivated individuals. They do not always give a 100%. I don't mean to give a bad name to the people who are working really hard in the missions, but some stakeholders felt that sometimes UN staff are not working as hard as they might. One of the Gender Advisers said to me, "It's really difficult for people to leave their computers." So it seems for the people in the mission that there is just not as much at stake, whereas if you are in a local population, you really want to figure things out and maybe you see the benefits of gender mainstreaming, or adopting a gender perspective in that way. My sense was that progress is not taking place in the mission in the same way.

The UN has a long way to go, but they are trying. They have a policy in place and they are trying to get it implemented. I think it is important to situate these efforts within some of the literature on gender mainstreaming. Certainly Carol is a lot more comfortable and familiar with the literature than I am, but I know the literature has identified at least two different types of gender mainstreaming strategies. The first is the *integrative strategy*, which is moving the issue from the margins into a pre-existing framework. The second is agenda setting or *transformative strategy*, where the issues completely transform the system. So some have argued for the two to be seen as successive rather than opposing strategies; we would first start with an integrative strategy (moving the issue in from the margins) and move to a transformative strategy (where you transform the whole system). I prefer this successive approach, as I do not think it useful to think of the two strategies as dichotomous. The UN seems to be in the early integrative stage of the process. They are really trying to get the concept of gender mainstreaming, into the pre-existing framework of the UN system itself and into the peacekeeping missions themselves.

But some authors have argued that the goal of gender equality, which is part of the gender mainstreaming definition, can only be achieved if you are using a transformative strategy. So this begs the question, will the UN be able to continue to pursue success - limited success at this point - in an integrative stage and progress to a transformative stage? Certainly transformation is a long process which involves changing cultural norms and ideas of men and women and changing these in post-conflict, war-affected situations, in a peacekeeping mission that is a very challenging and stressful environment anyway. Importantly, many of the Gender Advisers noted that there had been progress made since 1325. I think that was obviously a very useful document, but that still there is lot of work that needs to be done. So it remains to be seen where the UN will be headed; if the Gender Advisers' strategy will be successful in terms of the larger agenda around gender mainstreaming in UN peacekeeping and the UN's efforts at assisting war-affected populations.

My conversation with the GAs really did not include a discussion of other axes of inequalities (e.g., race, class, religion, nationality, ethnicity, etc.). They really did not talk about how other types of identities affected their attempts at mainstreaming gender. So in future research I would like to ask, "If we are thinking about the UN moving towards a transformative agenda, does that agenda include an attempt to mainstream race, class, religion and different types of identities? And ultimately, can it be transformed without including those?"

I've been talking about the chapter on GAs and their strategies. In the next chapter, I argue that one reason for the lack of progress in gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping missions is a persistent and fundamental confusion between the terms 'gender' and 'women' at the mission level. What happens as a result of this is that the UN staff and the local population marginalize what they consider to be 'women's issues.' In other words, they do not see gender as something involving men. I was curious about the impact of this so I will give you a few examples of how the confusion manifests itself in the mission. You find that it's not necessarily just confusion between 'gender' and 'women,' but it's also a confusion around 'gender' and 'gender mainstreaming,' as well as resistance to the idea of mainstreaming gender in general.

The title of this chapter, "I'll Just Call Them 'Women's Issues,'" comes out of a conversation I had with a Civil Affairs officer. When I asked him about the gender issues he dealt with on a daily basis, after a second he said, "I'll just call them women's issues." This is evidence of the genuine confusion that exists in the mission. It was a way for him to say, "I don't know what you are talking about in regards to gender, but I think talking about women is the same way to talk about that." Another such example comes from a GA who told me about a Commissioner of Police who could not understand why there was a male representative in the Gender Unit. Why was this guy talking about gender issues when gender is just about women? It seems that in the missions and elsewhere, gender is a marked category; men do not see themselves as gendered individuals. This is similar to the way that people of color are a marked category. Many times whites do not think of themselves as having any investment in racial issues. This seems to be the case for men vis-à-vis gender as well.

Another example of the 'confusion' within the mission was actually resistance by men. It went beyond just being confused by it. One of the GAs told me that her supervisor thinks she should be working for UNIFEM [the United Nations Development Fund for Women]. He was very dismissive when she tried to become involved in DDR or security or any of these other things, which he did not think a GA should be part of. So he would ask her, "Was this shared with UNIFEM? Are you being in touch with the people you should be working for instead of bothering me with all these issues?" I asked this Adviser, "Do you think that there is confusion going on in the mission?" She said to me, "Oh, it is worse than that. It is worse than that, my dear." So there is a sense of outright hostility in the mission to the idea of gender issues.

One of the GAs told me that she saw that the concept of gender was used opportunistically by males of the local population. In particular, if they were trying to access resources, such as jobs from the UN, they would say, "Well, gender

mainstreaming has to do with us, too, so you have to address our needs.” If, however, you tried to get them to come to a workshop on gender balance that dealt with women, or with something that would traditionally be considered women’s issues, they would say, “Well, we don’t have anything to do with that.” So there was really a strategic understanding of what the concept of gender entailed for males in the local population.

The Gender Advisers also found that ‘gender’ sometimes not only equals ‘women,’ but specifically, ‘violence against women.’ So instead of gender mainstreaming meaning increasing women’s involvement in politics or increasing employment opportunities for women, they said gender automatically connotes women being raped or other forms of sexual violence. One Adviser summed it up when she said, “If we were not involved in these other parts of gender mainstreaming, say working with political affairs and such things, all gender issues would be seen as sexual exploitation and abuse.”

Another point of confusion was the idea that ‘gender mainstreaming’ equals ‘gender balance.’ These are very different concepts. So instead of a holistic process of integrating gender into all aspects of the mission, they saw gender mainstreaming as an effort to increase representation of women throughout the mission. Many times, I found this particular way of thinking in the conversations I had with the military members of the mission. In one case, I asked a Civil Affairs officer I was interviewing what the military would do with regard to gender mainstreaming, and he answered, “We have a number of females on our team.” He was equating gender balance with gender mainstreaming, which certainly is part of it, but not the whole picture.

There were instances where the GAs themselves appeared to be confused, or if not confused, then falling victim to the dominant way of thinking in the mission. For example, in the following quote, a GA speaks about the Ministry of Gender Equality or the Ministry of the Women’s Affairs as if they are interchangeable, when the ministries may, in fact, be responsible for very different things: “There was also a proposal to create a Ministry for Gender Equality or a Ministry for Women’s Affairs, you know, I don’t quite remember the definition, but there was the intention to create a local women’s machinery.” Another Adviser told me that certain forms of gender-based violence do not fall under the mandate of the Gender Unit, but rather under Human Rights. And one seemed to confuse concepts when she said the following: “I don’t work with the [local] women on the concepts of gender. I work with them on the implementation of [Security Council Resolution] 1325, on women’s political participation, on demobilization and reintegration of human ex-combatants, and in the struggle against sexual and gender-based violence.” So we see the different levels of understanding on the part of the Advisers themselves.

What impact do these various forms of confusion and resistance have on the mission? Certainly they impact the allocation of responsibilities. Gender Advisers are expected to do more than they should in certain areas and are restricted from doing things in other areas (e.g., the earlier example of the GA who was not told about senior management meetings because the staff did not think it had anything to do with her). They also cause a duplication of efforts, with the GAs doing the same things as UNIFEM and other women-centered agencies. They also impede the effectiveness of the GAs. In gender trainings,

the GAs have to put a lot of time and energy into explaining what gender means, and they never get to explain why it's important or how to mainstream it. Advisers find that in certain languages gender gets translated into 'sex.' So this is very difficult and they have to take a lot of care in trying to work that out. It is also translated into 'woman' and they find that very frustrating – that they are reinforcing things that they are trying to deconstruct.

Finally, the confusion around gender can actually exclude men, both in and out of the mission. If, for example, we talking about a conflict with some sort of ethnic dimension, and the questions asked about gender are understood to only mean 'women,' it would seem that the needs of minority men could be neglected. To me, this would be an important point for the UN to address because they are servicing such multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-national populations.

So again, what can we take away from all this information? First of all, and most basically, it seems that the complete opposite of mainstreaming is happening. The Gender Unit and the Advisers are treated as separate from the rest of the mission. They are isolated from the activities of the mission. There is this ghettoizing of both gender and women. Again, there is an attempt to mitigate this by including the Gender Unit in the office of the Head of the Mission, but this is not happening in every case. It is dependent on a set of factors, one being the personality of the senior level managers. One of the GAs said to me, "This integration is not happening. It is not happening."

Second, there seems to be different levels of understanding of gender mainstreaming and of the concept of gender among the GAs themselves. I was surprised by the diversity of views, which also certainly depends on the context in which the GAs are working, but it begs the question: what background are they coming from and how they are being hired? We know they are coming from various backgrounds, experience and training. Often, it is difficult to find anyone to fill the position because it is such a challenging, thankless and grueling job. It also seems that there is an added confusion among the mission personnel because the GA's presence in the mission is a result of two different policies: the actual gender mainstreaming policy as well as [Security Council Resolution] 1325. The two policies seem to take different approaches. The gender mainstreaming policy is obviously taking a gendered approach. It talks about the importance of focusing on men and women, and the unequal relationships that exist between them in peacekeeping. On the other hand, while 1325 also advocates for the need to include a gender perspective in the missions, it more emphasizes the need to focus on women's particular contribution, participation, and protection. The UN Office for the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) has placed a document online that identifies complementary strategies for gender mainstreaming, like the idea of *targeted interventions* specifically meant to address the needs of women. In the document, they said this is not contradictory to the gender mainstreaming policy. But if it's not contradictory, it is at least confusing, especially for people who have not studied gender very deeply. In a mission with so much else going on and people who don't have background in gender studies or don't have a lot of time to think about gender, it can be very difficult for them to understand the nuance of mainstreaming gender and targeting women at the same time; this strikes me as a place where there needs to be better

explanation. I had to put in a lot of work looking at the documents to figure out how exactly they are talking about these things. The people in the missions really do not have the time, and often, they do not have the inclination, to do so.

Another point to take away is that there is an absence of benefits for men from gender mainstreaming. What happens then is that they have no investment in it. In my conversations with GAs, they could rarely offer me an instance where gender mainstreaming actually benefited men. In fact, they said the opposite; it was threatening to men because it meant giving up their power on some level. This was both at the community level and even more so in the mission level, because they did not get that it was about men and women. Even the men in the Gender Units were working on women's issues. They were not necessarily working on projects that were assisting local men in the populations. As an NGO worker noted, "What I notice is when you have very frank dialogue with men (laughs), you know, they're like, 'Forget it! This is the woman's role.'"

So keeping all of this in mind, what recommendations would I make to the UN? What did I think needed to be changed? First of all, there needs to be some sort of assessment of the GAs' level of understanding of gender issues. It seems crucial, since they are the ones advising on implementing the policy, that we need a baseline understanding of where they are coming from. Often, the UN is so desperate to get someone into the position that it is unable to get someone with that baseline experience.

In the same vein, it seems we need to standardize the hiring requirements for the GA positions. In this way, we could standardize their level of understanding of what they are going to be doing in the peacekeeping missions.

Also, if possible (and I certainly know this a question of resources), offer multi-level trainings within the mission. First, offer one that focuses on the concept of gender to make sure there is an understanding of that. Then offer a second level that discusses how to do it. Offer follow-up trainings, and make sure that they are doing it in their daily activities. One of the GAs told me that they do the trainings with the senior level officers in the military because they are the only ones who can speak English, and then expect these officers to go back and translate it to the troops. They do not follow-up to make sure it is being effective. I think there may be some sort of evaluation happening in the mission in Sierra Leone but, in general, making resources and time available for evaluation seems crucial.

I would also recommend developing some UN programs, or specifically peacekeeping programs, that target men as partners. They need to be convinced of the long and short-term benefits of gender mainstreaming for them and their partners. As far as I know, there has been only one expert meeting that was convened at the level of the UN. This was called "The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality" and happened back in 2003. It was presented by a bunch of different departments – the Division for the Advancement of Women, International Labour Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and the United Nations Development Programme. A lot of working papers came out of it and there was an online discussion, but that was the only

thing in all of my excursions to the UN website, that was the only thing that talked specifically about what role men and boys have in achieving gender equality. The gender mainstreaming documents say that it includes men but does not talk about how or why it is important, or the ways that men could get involved.

Q: Do we know much about the levels of sexual violence perpetrated against men and boys?

CKM: We know certainly that levels of sexual and gender-based violence are much higher for women. There are certainly male victims of this kind of violence, and that would be one of the benefits that we would get if we start acknowledging that there are male victims and start paying attention to their needs. This was something I was going to talk about in future research directions, and is something that needs to be acknowledged by the UN. Certainly it is not happening to the same degree, but it is happening and it is not something that they are addressing at all. It did not come up in any of the conversations that I had.

Q: Isn't the energy that is going into creating support systems within the UN coming from women with the intention of serving women?

CKM: At this point I think that a lot of it is targeted towards women. The crucial question is: "Is that a problem?" A lot of people do not think of it as a problem because *women* are the ones who need these systems and *women* are the ones who are suffering.

Q: Are Gender Advisers creating any programs that address men?

CKM: One of the Advisers told me about a pilot program where she was working with male members of the local population addressing violence against women. This has been a benefit for women, though not necessarily a benefit for men. However, she is helping men engage with the issue. Some of the NGO workers with whom I was speaking felt very strongly about addressing men's needs, saying, "Let's not think about men just yet, let's actually finish our work on women before we start addressing the needs of men." There are a lot of feminists who think we should really center the women and their experiences, really address their needs and concerns. I do not know, it is a difficult question, but I really do think you need to engage men somewhat because gender equity is not going to be found until women are not doing all the work.

Q: Did the GAs have anything about the gender resource packet DPKO put out? Whether they found it useful?

CKM: Yes. Two of them told me that it was frustrating because it was not translated, so it was basically useless for them. They were the only two who mentioned it at all. A lot of them talked about Security Council Resolution 1325, and they used it as a way to direct what they were going to do. Others talked about how they could only do what was in

their mission's mandate. That is where that idea of 'independent prioritization,' which I spoke about earlier, came in.

Q: One of the things I'm interested in is accountability. I am wondering if you think that the presence of a Gender Adviser on a peacekeeping mission increases the accountability of the mission to the local population, especially in relation to SEA?

CKM: I was surprised to find out that the Gender Unit was not actively involved in what was going on with SEA. In a few missions there have been specific SEA units set-up to address these issues. In some of the conversations I was having with the GAs, they would just say it wasn't part of their job. I do not know if I found that productive because it seems like they should have some sort of involvement in that and not just write it off as something they are not responsible for. I think it may have something to do with the fact that they felt really resentful that all the resources were going to the SEA units. The Gender Advisers were really scrambling, but they were trying to get things done with what they had. I think SEA does public outreach efforts to the community to say, "If you are having a problem come to us." Maybe if a Gender Unit was established and a SEA unit was established, then there would be some sort of relationship with the local population so that the Gender Unit may go to them as well. I am not sure actually. That is one of the things that if I had been in-mission I would have been really interested to see.

On the one hand, the Gender Advisers felt that the SEA units were given a lot of resources that the Gender Units would have liked as well. Also, the reason they do not want to do SEA themselves is because SEA means policing the mission. They do not want to be the gender police. They want to be the people who are helping the mainstreaming efforts. Coming to a police unit versus coming to an ally is a very different thing. I remember that when Nadine Puechguirbal, the Gender Adviser from the Haiti mission, came and spoke at the Boston Consortium, she spoke about how difficult it would be for her to work with people on mainstreaming gender, and then to turn around and discipline them for some SEA issue.

Carol Cohn: I have another question partly related to what you were saying about Gender Advisers' 'independent prioritization,' which sounded pretty positive in the way you presented it. Some of what I heard in interviews at DPKO headquarters suggests a possibly less positive aspect. For example, there was one man who said that in his mission, when he wanted to do some radio programs to encourage women to vote. He said, "I went to the Gender Adviser for help with this, and the only thing the GA wanted to do was work on gender-based violence. She blew me off and said, 'This isn't what I do.'"

So, it seems to me that the issue of GAs making their own priorities can cut both ways. On the one hand, as in the case of SEA, GAs may be resisting priorities coming out of UN headquarters because they see them as based in institutional politics, and nonresponsive to the real needs and priorities of the women on the ground. On the other hand, some people at headquarters then complain that the GAs don't do what they are *supposed* to do (help others mainstream gender in their work), and instead do only what

they *want* to do (which for some of them is working with the local women and not dealing with mainstreaming the mission). Of course, it also must be said that sometimes the mission is not very open to being gender mainstreamed. On the other hand, it *is* a big part of their job, even if it is something that they are not so interested in. I have certainly heard some very negative things about some of the Gender Advisers not only from headquarters but also from the NGOs in the field. So I am wondering, did your research give you any insight into how these women view the scope of their jobs?

CKM: Right. A couple of thoughts about that. First of all, I tried to appreciate and understand the position that the Gender Advisers were coming from and what would make sense to them in terms of the marginalized and isolated positions they found themselves in.

Often their reasoning stems from the idea that, "Nobody is paying attention, so I'm going to do what I think is right." Yet, in the conversation that I had with the NGO workers in particular, I spoke with a woman who had worked in one country with a Gender Adviser who no one could manage to get in touch with. She said, "I have no idea what this woman is up to, I do not know what she is doing and neither does anybody else." I heard that in a couple of different instances. I certainly have my own opinions regarding who I thought was on the ball and who I thought was struggling. Maybe these people had been placed at the last minute, or did not have a sophisticated understanding of what needed to happen, or did not have experience with a peacekeeping mission previous to that.

There were some missions, I thought, where things were going better in the gender mainstreaming efforts, perhaps because of the Gender Adviser herself. The thing about peacekeeping missions is that you always run into a multitude of factors that are coming together and making it very difficult to generalize. I certainly was looking with a critical eye, but at the same time, when you talk to the women and you start understanding the context in which they are working, you tend to feel sympathy for them; it is such a high-stress position, and they are doing really difficult work. So, that would be my answer.

CC: But there is an important question about who gets hired for these positions, and how prepared they are for the job. Regarding the 'Gender Adviser who people say no one is able to get in touch with' – even when she was first being appointed, before she went to the field, what I heard was, "This is not a competent person, this is not what is going to work." If this was well-known from the beginning, it makes you wonder, why was she appointed? Did you learn anything about how the General Advisers get appointed?

CKM: No, as I said before, it seems to me that it is a pool of people, with which they work, but I don't know enough about it.

Let me explain why I did not ask some of these questions that seem to be no-brainers. Originally this was not the direction I was going. I was originally going to Haiti to work on issues of masculinity in the local population. Then that fell through and so I decided to take a larger view and talk to the Gender Advisers to get a more holistic picture of what is going on in the missions. At that point I was still really interested in SEA because it was a timely topic and I have been interested in sexual and gender-based violence in post- conflict

settings. But the conversations themselves did not go that way. People really did not want to talk about SEA because the Gender Advisers were sick of it. When I spoke to the GA in DPKO HQ, she asked, "What are you going to talk about?" She said, "I bet you want to talk about SEA..." So I started changing directions. At that point I had already done a couple of interviews, so that is why I did not ask some of the questions that I now wished I asked. It just wasn't my frame of reference at the time.

Q: Have you ever seen a recruitment announcement for this position and do they try to match people from the country with a specific mission?

CKM: The ad for the Advisers goes out independently of the mission; it does not specify where the mission is going. In terms of matching advisors to the missions, I did not find that to be the case. In fact, one GA specifically said to me that sometimes it was difficult to talk about certain cultural traditions because the GAs were seen as outsiders too. She was African in a mission in a different African country, and she was seen as an outsider.

On a related issue, I know that that OSAGI has a list of qualified female candidates for upper level positions in missions.

CC: Yes, that list is not supposed to be for Gender Advisers, but for higher levels, including women qualified to be SRSGs (Special Representatives of the Secretary- General) – heads of mission. In interviews at the UN HQ I have heard that DPKO tends to think that the people on the OSAGI list are not really appropriately qualified. But people in OSAGI say that DPKO will never tell them what's wrong, or what qualifications they are looking for that they aren't finding. There are at least three points to briefly make here. First, it might be good if DPKO and OSAGI just talked together and worked this out. But second, this relates to a classic issue in the 'gendered organizations' literature: what counts as qualified for whom? Are the qualifications they are looking for ones that are implicitly biased towards men? Why is it that having the ability to mainstream gender in a peace-keeping operation is not on the list of qualifications? Why is it that a male SRSG might himself lead a mission rife with sexual exploitation and trafficking without that disqualifying him from heading future missions? Which brings us to the third point – to what degree are these appointments made on the basis of qualifications and competence, and to what degree are other factors in play? If other factors play a big role, you have to wonder how big a difference will be made by having even the best list of qualified women.

CKM: I do not know which is worse, what is going on in the missions or what is going on in headquarters. The stuff that goes on at headquarters is just as bad. That is what one of the Gender Advisers said, "I do not know how Comfort does it. I have no idea how she deals with people at headquarters."

Biography

Colleen Keaney-Mischel is a doctoral candidate in the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Northeastern University. Her research interests include gender and international security, sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected communities, and the reintegration of refugees and displaced populations. The title of her dissertation is, "Bridging the Gap: The Role of Gender Advisers in Implementing United Nations Gender Mainstreaming Policy in Peacekeeping Missions," which focuses on the challenges to engendering peacekeeping missions. *[PhD awarded January 2007]*