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Violating Peace

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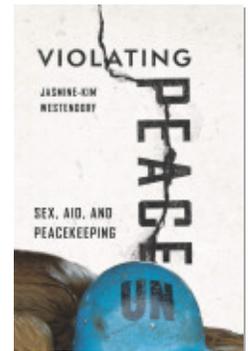
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THE HISTORY AND NATURE OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN PEACE OPERATIONS

In early 2018, the global humanitarian community was rattled by international media reports of aid workers hiring prostitutes and hosting sex parties in Haiti during the emergency response to the 2010 earthquake. As the story unfolded, it became apparent that some of the staff involved had previously been implicated in similarly inappropriate sexual behaviors in previous humanitarian deployments, including in conflict contexts. Moreover, after their dismissal from Oxfam, a number of them found work in other organizations also working with vulnerable populations in emergency and conflict zones.¹

At the time of the incidents in Haiti, the humanitarian response to the earthquake was inextricably linked to the ongoing UN Stabilization Mission In Haiti (MINUSTAH), which had been deployed since 2004 in response to violence and instability in the country. MINUSTAH consistently experienced some of the highest number of reports of sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peacekeeping, including reports of transactional sex, sex with minors, and rape.² MINUSTAH's mandate included

the restoration of a secure and stable environment, the promotion of formal political processes, the strengthening of Haiti's governance institutions and rule of law, and the promotion and protection of human rights in the country.³ After the 2010 earthquake, the peace operation was also tasked with assisting the Haitian authorities and the humanitarian community in a response for affected communities. As a result, the distinction between peacekeepers deployed under a UN mandate and humanitarians deployed in response to the natural disaster was blurred—they worked in the same context, they were drawn from similar organizations, they worked closely together to serve the same affected communities, and, perhaps most important, the dynamics of their relationships with local communities were similar. This close association reinforces the importance of studying not only sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers but also the interlinked perpetration by the broader range of actors associated with a peace operation's presence in a country. It also raises questions about whether the nature of such abuses perpetrated by peacekeepers, particularly military and police peacekeepers, differs significantly from those perpetrated by civilian interveners—including civilian peacekeepers, aid workers, and diplomats. Private security contractors add a layer of complexity to this mix, sitting as they do between the uniformed and civilian sectors.

The Oxfam scandal raised another important issue, namely, which behaviors are considered to fall under the category of sexual exploitation and abuse and what role consent plays in determining this, particularly when adults are involved. The sexually inappropriate behaviors in this particular case included purchasing sex from adult women who were working as prostitutes. There was speculation that some of the women may have been underage; the Oxfam investigation was unable to substantiate that allegation, but noted that the possibility could not be completely ruled out.⁴ Such transactional sex, even when it involves consenting adults, breaches the UN and humanitarian community's codes of conduct relating to sexual exploitation and abuse, but it is not necessarily criminal—that depends on the regulation of prostitution within the host state's legal frameworks.⁵ This adds another level of conceptual and practical difficulties in understanding and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse: the behaviors the category encompasses are varied, only some are criminal, they involve radically different levels of consent, and it can

be difficult to substantiate allegations because of the contexts into which peace operations are deployed.

This chapter revolves around these complexities, aiming to untangle the nature of sexual misconduct in peace operations, the ways in which different groups of interveners perpetrate it, and the factors that contribute to its perpetration in peace operations. I begin by briefly tracing the history of sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations before delineating a typology of sorts that distinguishes between four main types of behavior that fall under the category of sexual exploitation and abuse. This is crucial to the study of how such behaviors affect the international community's capacity to achieve its peacebuilding goals and why policy responses have largely failed to date. I then discuss the causal and contextual factors that underpin the perpetration of sexual exploitation and abuse and consider the interconnections between the abuses by interveners, conflict-related sexual violence, and sexual harassment and abuse perpetrated within the international intervener community. Finally, I will look in greater detail at the issue of sexual misconduct by civilian interveners. To date, the majority of data and analysis has focused on uniformed peacekeepers, despite the fact that civilian peacekeepers are more responsible per capita for allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations and despite growing awareness of the pervasiveness of sexual harassment and abuse within intervener communities. Understanding this particular element of the puzzle is critical to developing a comprehensive understanding of the nature, causes, and consequences of sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Brief History

Sexual exploitation and abuse first emerged as an issue in peace operations during the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1993, when the number of prostitutes in the country grew from six thousand before the UN arrived to more than twenty-five thousand in 1993.⁶ The widespread use of prostitutes by UN personnel involved violence and the sexual abuse of girls, with some women reporting that "UNTAC customers could be more cruel" than Cambodian customers at brothels.⁷ In fact, a group of women working in brothels wrote to the UN

complaining about this and requesting that the UN ask peacekeepers to behave less violently in the future. Although the exact scale of peacekeeper involvement in sexual exploitation and abuse in Cambodia is impossible to know, some data sheds light on its prevalence: a Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) survey found that 45 percent of Dutch navy and marines personnel deployed to UNTAC had sexual contact with sex workers or other members of the local population during their five-month deployment and did not use condoms consistently.⁸ At the time, the UN response to the growing problem of peacekeeper participation in sexual exploitation and abuse was threefold: the head of mission, Yasushi Akashi, dismissed the significance of the issue, declaring that “boys will be boys”; mission leadership advised peacekeepers not to wear uniforms when visiting brothels nor to park UN vehicles directly outside; and an additional eight hundred thousand condoms were shipped to the country to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS among UN personnel.⁹

In 1995, the issue of peacekeeper misconduct was again brought to international attention, this time in relation to Bosnia-Herzegovina, where evidence emerged first of the trafficking of women to work as sex slaves in brothels frequented by UN mission personnel, including peacekeepers and particularly American DynCorp private contractors working within the mission; and later, of the complicity of interveners in this trafficking, including the purchase of women and girls as young as twelve as sex slaves.¹⁰ These behaviors came on the back of years of UN peacekeepers engaging in transactional sex with Bosnian women during the war.¹¹ Nevertheless, it was not until 1999 that the negative media and rising public attention prompted the UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to pursue policy responses to address the problem—suggesting that the UN was reluctant to acknowledge and address the involvement of peacekeepers in trafficking.¹² Once underway, the UN response failed to provide adequate protection to victims and adopted a more limited definition of trafficking than that set out under international law, excluding women who were aware that they would work as prostitutes upon arrival in Bosnia and only including those who were not.¹³ These women were therefore excluded from any protections or support services; in fact, the two gender advisors in UNMIBH and the International Police Task Force (IPTF) who made determinations of trafficking status until 2001 referred

to these women as “migrant prostitutes” and suggested to Human Rights Watch that the UN had no responsibilities towards them.¹⁴

Shortly thereafter, attention turned to West Africa, where independent consultants raised the alarm that staff from the UN and from NGOs had been abusing and exploiting local women and girls in refugee camps in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. A subsequent UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) investigation in 2001 verified that sexual misconduct among aid workers was prevalent, documenting, for instance, the sexual relationship between a UN civilian staff member and a seventeen-year-old refugee in exchange for school fees, the violent rape of girls by NGO staff in refugee camps, the rape of boys by UN peacekeepers in Sierra Leone, the exchange of sex for food provided by NGO staff, and the refusal of international staff to take responsibility for children they had fathered with local women and girls.¹⁵ In his statement releasing the report, Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared that

sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian staff cannot be tolerated. It violates everything the UN stands for. Men, women and children displaced by conflict or other disasters are among the most vulnerable people on earth. They look to the UN and its humanitarian partners for shelter and protection. Anyone employed by or affiliated with the UN who breaks that sacred trust must be held accountable and, when the circumstances so warrant, prosecuted.¹⁶

In response, the general assembly adopted a resolution “*expressing its grave concern* at incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse against vulnerable populations” and directing the secretary-general to extend remedial and preventive measures to all peace and humanitarian operations, to ensure that reporting and investigative procedures are in place in all such operations, and to maintain data on sexual exploitation and abuse. It “encouraged” all UN bodies and NGOs to do the same.¹⁷ The secretary-general consequently issued the 2003 bulletin, which outlined a zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse for all UN staff and the duties of mission leadership in holding perpetrators accountable, including through referring cases to national authorities for criminal prosecution. This is also known as the zero tolerance bulletin or policy, and it promulgated six specific standards:

- (a) Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal;
- (b) Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence;
- (c) Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, is prohibited. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance;
- (d) Sexual relationships between United Nations staff and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the United Nations and are strongly discouraged;
- (e) Where a United Nations staff member develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual exploitation or sexual abuse by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not and whether or not within the United Nations system, he or she must report such concerns via established reporting mechanisms;
- (f) United Nations staff are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Managers at all levels have a particular responsibility to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.¹⁸

It also mandated that all non-UN entities or individuals working in cooperation with the UN accept and implement those standards of behavior as a condition of their cooperative arrangement. The zero tolerance policy has been a cornerstone of sexual exploitation and assault policy ever since, albeit hotly contested on the basis of its treatment of consent between adults (all transactional sex is prohibited, regardless of whether it involves consenting adults) and its implications for understanding the agency of local women involved (all sexual relationships between peacekeepers and locals are strongly discouraged—but not prohibited—because of the unequal power dynamics, even if they are not sexually abusive or exploitative).¹⁹ These tensions have significant implications for the implementation of the policy on the ground in peace operations and for its credibility among intervener communities, which will be revisited in chapter 6. During interviews, some respondents argued that the incoherence and

inexactitude of the policy with regards to consensual adult relationships results in some staff treating the rest of the policy as equally flawed.

These early examples reveal some key characteristics of sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations: the pervasiveness of such behaviors and the prevalence of abuse against children; the variety of behaviors involved, only some of which are criminal; the involvement of both uniformed and civilian UN peacekeepers as well as private contractors, aid workers, and others associated with peace operations; and the failure of policy responses to prevent sexual misconduct despite significant efforts. These themes will recur throughout this book.

A Typology of Bad Behavior

The data available on sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by interveners suggests that the range of misconduct is diverse, encompassing opportunistic sexual abuse, transactional sex, networked sexual exploitation, and extremely violent or sadistic attacks. It also suggests that acts of abuse and exploitation are driven by a range of different motivating and permissive factors. As a result, it is useful to analyze sexual exploitation and abuse in terms of the way individual cases involve cash and other material resources, the extent to which they have been planned or involve a number of perpetrators, and whether they are linked to larger criminal networks. It is also useful to understand those actions that are criminal in contrast to those that are not. By distinguishing the different types of behaviors that the general category encompasses, it is possible to better understand the form and function of specific instances of sexual exploitation and abuse and identify those factors that either cause such actions or create the context in which they occur.

As Kate Grady's study of UN data collection on allegations of sexual misconduct demonstrated, the UN has abandoned and developed new taxonomies of sexual exploitation and abuse on an annual basis, which has made tracking trends or using the data for analysis virtually impossible.²⁰ This highlights the need for robust categories that are broad enough to be useful in understanding the nature and dynamics of the abuses that occurred. Understanding the different forms sexual exploitation and abuse takes and the factors and motivators that give rise to them is crucial

to understanding the varying impacts it has on peacebuilding outcomes. It is also essential to understanding why policy responses to date have failed to effectively prevent such behaviors or hold perpetrators accountable. Those policies have tended to characterize sexual exploitation and abuse as one form of misconduct perpetrated on an individual basis, rather than a very diverse set of behaviors reflecting myriad causal and contextual factors, only some of which are addressed by the conduct and discipline approach to prevention and accountability mechanisms.²¹

A typology of this sort inevitably raises questions about the prevalence of the different types of behavior identified. Unfortunately, however, the quantitative data on sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations is not sufficiently robust to support credible claims of the prevalence of the specific behaviors I delineate. Quantitative data on sexual misconduct in peace operations is primarily available through the UN's Conduct and Discipline Unit—it is included in the annual reports of the secretary-general on Special Measures on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and it is the basis for most quantitative studies of such abuse.²² The UN data relates only to allegations against UN staff and personnel in UN peace operations and, as Grady's close analysis of UN data collection and reporting trends over time shows, is unreliable due to poor data management, potential false allegations, and a likely underreporting.²³ The lack of uniformly robust reporting mechanisms for misconduct in peace operations globally also affects the data collected: an expert from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for the Prevention of SEA Taskforce reported that a pilot project in multiple countries found that the lack of trust in reporting mechanisms leads to far fewer allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse; when trust in these mechanism was built, the number of sexual misconduct cases reported increased significantly.²⁴ These factors are compounded by the way the data is presented in the UN database and annual reports, with multiple victims grouped under a single allegation and no disaggregation of the specific forms of abuse experienced by each. Moreover, as discussed later in this chapter, the way specific allegations are coded in the UN database as particular forms of misconduct is highly variable, which is in part due to the complexity and intersection of various forms of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation and the difficulties involved in investigating allegations of misconduct. In addition, there is evidence that not all allegations and cases of sexual misconduct by

peacekeepers appear in the official reports, as the Code Blue Campaign at AIDS-Free World has documented.²⁵ Ragnhild Nordås and Siri Rustad's Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Peacekeepers dataset includes valuable data on a number of non-UN peace operations also active between 1999 and 2010, but the time-limited nature of the dataset and the fact that it relies heavily on the UN data means it is also unable to generate robust conclusions regarding prevalence of different forms of sexual misconduct that I discuss in this chapter.²⁶ As a result of these limitations, it is impossible to rank the types of behavior by prevalence, but it is possible to indicate general patterns of perpetration, based on a combination of the qualitative and quantitative data available. Furthermore, the limitations of the quantitative data highlight the value of developing a robust qualitative account of the nature and patterns of sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated in peace operations.

Opportunistic Sexual Abuse

Soldiers have a long history of perpetrating sexual and gender-based violence in both conflict and post-conflict situations, and rape and sexual violence have taken place on a mass scale in many conflicts into which peace operations have been deployed, including Sierra Leone, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Timor-Leste, and Liberia.²⁷ While some conflict-related sexual violence may be used strategically in aid of military objectives—often characterized as “a weapon of war”—it may also be perpetrated opportunistically for private reasons, or as a “practice of war,” one which Elisabeth Wood argues “is not ordered (even implicitly) or institutionalized, but is tolerated for a variety of reasons.”²⁸ Given the many reasons rape occurs during war, it is perhaps not surprising that soldiers also perpetrate such violence during peace operations.

Sexual abuse, according to the UN, includes sexual assault, rape, and other intrusions of a sexual nature, and it is perpetrated both by individuals and groups.²⁹ Nordås and Rustad found reports of rape in eleven of the thirty-six peace operations they investigated (although specific data was not available in nearly half of the peace operations, so this figure is likely higher).³⁰ In 2017, the UN's Conduct and Discipline Unit recorded twenty allegations of sexual abuse, defined as “any sexual relations with a

minor and any non-consensual sexual relations with an adult,” by military, police, and civilian peacekeepers across ten peacekeeping operations.³¹ This accounted for one third of all sexual exploitation and abuse allegations recorded, a steep decrease from 2017 when sexual abuse accounted for half of all allegations. Fourteen of the allegations were categorized as rape, nine of which involved children, and some involved more than one victim—one allegation related to acts involving fifty-two victims, although fifty victims were subject to sexual exploitation and two to sexual abuse.³² In addition, the secretary-general’s annual report on sexual exploitation and abuse noted thirty-four allegations of sexual abuse perpetrated by implementing partners of the UN, which included abuse against twenty girls, three boys, nine women, and two men. These statistics suggest the relative prevalence of rape as a form of sexual misconduct in peace operations, although it is unlikely that these statistics accurately reflect the true scale of this form of behavior given the paucity of quantitative data available, as noted above.

Putting aside questions of prevalence, many non-UN investigations have documented the perpetration of what appears to be opportunistic rape by interveners. For instance, in 2015, Human Rights Watch documented a number of rapes in the Central African Republic: two young women, aged eighteen and fourteen respectively, recounted being dragged into the bush and gang-raped by armed peacekeepers from the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) peacekeepers near their base—the former had been seeking food or money from the peacekeepers and was threatened with death if she resisted, while the latter was simply walking by.³³ Another fourteen-year-old girl raped by a Burundian peacekeeper in the Central African Republic, who gave birth to a son as a result, recounted to the *Washington Post*, “Sometimes when I’m alone with my baby, I think about killing him. He reminds me of the man who raped me.”³⁴ Similar accounts have emerged in other countries. In Haiti, a girl told the *BBC* that a Brazilian peacekeeper raped her when she was fourteen years old: “He held me down by the arms and held both my wrists, twisting them back and we struggled together. And then he raped me.” Her mother told the reporter, “When I found her I didn’t recognise my own child. . . She had the face of a dead person.”³⁵ South African peacekeepers serving

in the UN Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) have been convicted of the rape and murder of children, while in Sierra Leone, Ukrainian peacekeepers gang-raped a local woman, and a Guinean peacekeeper raped a twelve-year-old.³⁶

As I have noted, sexual abuse by peacekeepers often occurs in a context where sexual violence has long been a norm: contemporary civil wars are often (but not always) characterized by the extensive use of sexual- and gender-based violence by fighting groups that rests on deep-rooted social constructs of masculinity, constructs that can produce such violence even outside of war.³⁷ Moreover, a recent survey of civil wars from 1989 to 2009 found that peace operations were more likely to be deployed into conflicts that had experienced high levels of sexual violence than into those that did not.³⁸ Further, military peacekeepers are, first and foremost, soldiers, and anecdotal reports of peacekeeper rape seem to revolve primarily around military peacekeepers rather than civilian peacekeepers or aid workers. This trend is borne out in the detailed discussions of sexual exploitation and abuse in Timor-Leste and Bosnia in the next chapter. Extensive research has demonstrated that the deliberate militarization of masculinity within armies as a training mechanism produces sexually violent behaviors, which goes some way to explaining this form of violence.³⁹ In some cases, there are also parallels between the normalization of sexual violence in peacekeepers' home countries and their perpetration of sexual abuse when on deployment with a UN mission. For example, UN statistics from 2016 show that uniformed peacekeeping personnel from the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa are responsible for the highest number of allegations of sexual misconduct. Sexual and gender-based violence is endemic in both countries, suggesting a culture of violence against women that would shape the behaviors of individual men in the military, including on peacekeeping deployments.⁴⁰ In this vein, Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley's recent study suggested that higher proportions of peacekeeping troops contributed from countries with relatively strong records of gender equality correlates with a lower incidence of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment reported in those peace operations.⁴¹

The main factor that distinguishes this form of sexual misconduct from those discussed below is that it is opportunistic insofar as it is for the private purposes of the rapist (or rapists) and it does not include the level of

preplanning or coordination that is characteristic of the other three types of behavior described below.

Planned, Sadistic Abuse

The second type of sexual misconduct apparent in the available data is related and similarly criminal, but distinct in that it is characterized not by its opportunistic nature but by the perpetration of rape in a planned, sadistic form. In 2015, an internal UN report was leaked after suppression by the UN hierarchy, documenting extensive and horrific instances of sexual abuse perpetrated against children in the Central African Republic by peacekeeping soldiers.⁴² The report documented the regular oral and anal rape of homeless and starving boys aged eight to fifteen by twenty-six peacekeepers from France, Chad, and Equatorial Guinea, noting that some of the children fled the relative safety of the refugee camp they were in after the attacks. In early 2016, more than 108 additional cases were investigated, including the sexual abuse of ninety-eight girls by international peacekeepers who had all returned to their home countries by the time interviews with victims occurred.⁴³ The report documented allegations that in 2014 a French military commander from the Sangaris force (a non-UN French military intervention in Central African Republic that operated under a UN mandate) had tied up and undressed four girls and forced them to have sex with a dog. One of the children consequently died, and another reported that she was ostracized by her community and called “the Sangaris’ dog” after the rape.⁴⁴

These cases are emblematic of this particular planned and sadistic form of sexual abuse and are clearly distinct from the other forms of misconduct I discuss in this chapter. These abuses are not perpetrated in pursuit of financial benefit, as are the production of pornography or involvement in sex trafficking. Nor are they transactional or opportunistic. They appear to be perpetrated for the sadistic pleasure of the perpetrators and involve both planning and coordination. These incidences are less common than the other forms of misconduct discussed, but they are not isolated. For instance, in 1993, Canadian peacekeepers in Somalia beat, raped, and tortured to death a Somali teenage boy whom they caught attempting to steal food and water that they had left out as bait for petty thieves.⁴⁵ And in 2005, a French logistics employee in the Democratic Republic of Congo

“was found with hundreds of videotapes that showed him torturing and sexually abusing naked girls.”⁴⁶ The use of torture and sex slavery in Bosnia, which will be discussed in the next chapter, is a further example of this type of sexual abuse.

This form of abuse has parallels with other torture perpetrated by peacekeepers—for instance, in early 2016, evidence was found that peacekeepers from the Republic of the Congo serving in Central African Republic had tortured to death two anti-balaka leaders, beat to death two civilians, and murdered twelve others, including women and children.⁴⁷ It also has parallels with the sexual torture perpetrated by American soldiers against Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib.⁴⁸ This suggests that this sadistic abuse does not just operate in the sexual sphere, but is facilitated by similar factors that give rise to military misconduct and torture more broadly.

Transactional Sex

According to the Zeid Report, commissioned by the UN to provide a comprehensive report on peacekeeper sexual exploitation and abuse, the vast majority of allegations investigated by the UN relate to transactional sex, or “survival sex,” including “the exchange of sex for money (on average \$1–3 per encounter), for food (for immediate consumption or barter later) or for jobs (especially affecting daily workers).”⁴⁹ The zero tolerance bulletin explicitly prohibits any “exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex,” but this form of behavior is not necessarily criminal in the same way that the two discussed above are—whether it is criminal or not depends on the nature of the transaction and the host state’s laws on prostitution and age of consent (if they exist).⁵⁰ The fundamental point of distinction between transactional sex and other forms of sexual misconduct is that transactional sex “involves a level of agency and negotiation” even though it is negotiated in the context of often extreme deprivation, desperation, and insecurity.⁵¹ (In the Central African Republic, for instance, most reported cases of sexual exploitation by peacekeepers occurred at the peak of the conflict.⁵²) In 2003, civilians from Bunia in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo were displaced and took refuge in and around UN headquarters and camps where an extensive survival sex economy sprung up. The *Independent* reported the story of thirteen year-old Faela, who became pregnant after repeated wartime rapes by soldiers

and whose father refused to support her because of the shame of her being an unmarried mother. In the internally displaced persons camp, she and her baby faced starvation and so every night she, along with other girls in the same situation, climbed through the fence into the compound where Uruguayan and Moroccan soldiers were based.

“If I go and see the [MONUC] soldiers at night and sleep with them, then they sometimes give me food, maybe a banana or a cake,” she says, looking down at her son. “I have to do it with them because there is nobody to care, nobody else to protect Joseph except me. He is all I have and I must look after him.” . . . “Going over to the camp is OK because the soldiers are kind to me and don’t point their guns like the other soldiers did,” Faela says.⁵³

A *Washington Post* investigation in Bunia documented similar stories, with one fourteen-year-old, known locally as “the one-dollar UN girl” because of the price she charges for sex with peacekeepers, telling reporters, “I’m sad about it. But I needed the dollars. I can’t go farm because of the militias. Who will feed me? . . . But at least they paid us. I was worthless anyhow. My honour was lost [due to wartime rape].”⁵⁴

This is not an uncommon story in post-conflict situations, where the intersection of wartime sexual violence, strong cultural norms around “shame,” material deprivation, and the presence of international interveners creates the conditions for survival sex economies to emerge and flourish. In Haiti, minors reported being offered food and small amounts of cash in exchange for sex.⁵⁵ In Guinea and Liberia, male humanitarian staff withheld services or essential commodities including food and oil, tent materials, medicine, ration cards, loans, and education or training courses until they received sex.⁵⁶ In Timor-Leste, locals, especially children, were “offered money and other material benefits in exchange for sex more or less at random,” and t-shirts were sold with the logo “Feel Safe Tonight: Sleep with a Peacekeeper,” explicitly referencing the irony of those sent to protect the population exploiting them.⁵⁷ It is unclear who designed and sold the t-shirts, which were accompanied by a cartoon image of a burly, threatening, and highly sexualized masculine bulldog wearing a peacekeeper’s beret. In Côte D’Ivoire, peacekeepers enlisted the assistance of local boys to procure girls for sex, offering them money, clothes, and souvenirs and impressing on them the need for secrecy to

avoid the peacekeepers being punished and their line of supplies being cut off.⁵⁸ And research in West Africa has suggested that some parents saw their children's participation in transactional sex as essential to their family's survival and therefore either encouraged or tacitly accepted it as a necessary harm.⁵⁹

Interestingly, some peacekeepers have made similar arguments, positing that their sexual "transactions" were acceptable because the "donated" food, resources, or money made the women involved more secure—essentially suggesting that exploitation can be benevolent in the context of peacekeeping economies.⁶⁰ It is important to recognize that it is not only peacekeepers and aid workers that participate in these transactional sex economies. Save the Children found that a diverse range of adult men between thirty to sixty years old were involved in sexual exploitation in Liberia; some were from the communities in the camp, but many were from outside, either visiting or working in or near the refugee camps where the exploitation occurred. These included "sugar daddies" who provided cash or other support to young women and girls in exchange for a regular sexual relationship, businessmen, video club operators, "big men" in the camps who held significant power or authority, government workers and officials, police officers, excombatants, soldiers from the Liberian army, and teachers in the community.⁶¹ It is also worth noting that prostitution by soldiers—or military prostitution—is also a well-documented phenomenon in nonpeacekeeping contexts.⁶² However, soldiers' engagement in transactional sex during peace operations carries with it particular implications, given the protective mandate under which peacekeepers are deployed and the higher expectations of the behavioral standards of peacekeepers.⁶³ This issue will be revisited in subsequent chapters, but it is within the context of these broader conflict and postconflict economies that transactional sex involving interveners must be understood and addressed.

While both adults and children engage in transactional sex and UN policies do not distinguish between the two (although interviews with UN staff suggested that the practical implementation of policies does, and it is primarily concerned with transactional sex involving children, which is supposed to be recorded as sexual abuse), the implications of transactional sex with children and adults differ significantly, and the majority of transactional sex reported in the literature relates to children. In fact,

a former MONUC employee told Sarah Spencer that “the Belgians [in MONUC] won’t touch anything over fourteen, and peacekeepers interviewed by Paul Higate suggested a fetishization of sex with children, with some arguing that soldiers “want to see what [sex with young girls] is like . . . to see if it is different” and others claiming that “having sex with [young girls] was ‘respectful’ of local culture” where age-of-consent norms are different.⁶⁴ That said, extensive transactional sex economies with adults do emerge in peace operation contexts, as the cases of Timor-Leste and Bosnia discussed in chapter 2 illustrate. Multiple respondents interviewed for this book lamented that when on deployment they had often been reluctant to raise such behavior with their superiors because they weren’t sure of the nature of the relationships in question or their transactional elements. Such relationships may involve various forms of compensation for sex—whether material goods such as food or money or, sometimes, forms of support that might also come as part of longer-term relationships such as accommodation, meals at restaurants, or school fees—and various levels of coercion, including withholding of aid or other humanitarian support. These forms of transactional sex between adults are perhaps less visible in the literature on and reports of transactional sex because of the less straightforward nature of exploitation given the involvement of consenting adults.

Transactional sex entails varying levels of consent, which is particularly tricky to determine when it involves children or adolescents. The Zeid Report notes that some girls interviewed described “rape disguised as prostitution” whereby the perpetrator “pays” the victim afterwards in order to suggest a legitimate consensual transaction. This has very different implications in terms of consent and agency and it demonstrates significant overlap with opportunistic sexual abuse discussed above. A case of the rape of a young boy in Côte d’Ivoire suggests something similar: the young returnee boy alleged that he was lured away from where he was fishing with friends by a uniformed peacekeeper whom he knew and trusted from previous encounters. The man raped the boy and gave him money to keep him quiet.⁶⁵ There are also questions about how consent is determined by investigators: one child who reported being raped by a Burundian peacekeeper in the Central African Republic had her case recorded as transactional sex rather than assault.⁶⁶ In addition to issues of consent, there is evidence that this sort of sexual exploitation and abuse

creates a situation of dependency whereby those who were abused seek out further transactional encounters. A fourteen year-old boy in South Sudan recounted in 2007 that after being raped by a uniformed peacekeeper, he now returns regularly to the same spot in the hope he will be picked up by other peacekeepers and paid for his services. He told reporters, “I know it is a terrible thing to do but I see the UN cars around late at night by the drinking places and I sit there in the hope of being picked up. If I get 1000 SD (\$3USD) a day then that is a good day.”⁶⁷ Reports have found that children are often cheated out of promised payments even where they have agreed to transactional sex.⁶⁸

On the other end of the spectrum, transactional relationships between consenting adults are murkier, particularly those that have some transactional elements but are also characterized by ongoing romantic or sexual relationships. The zero tolerance bulletin identifies “inherently unequal power dynamics” in relationships between UN staff and beneficiaries of assistance and “strongly [discourages]” them because they “undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the UN” but it does not prohibit them.⁶⁹ This stance has been strongly criticized for disregarding the capacity of locals, particularly women, to freely consent to such relationships, which may or may not involve transactions.⁷⁰ Further, who counts as a beneficiary is unclear: while one senior official in the UN’s Conduct and Discipline Unit argued that for peacekeepers, the whole population in the country into which they have been deployed qualify as beneficiaries because of the broad protection mandate of peacekeepers, others interviewed did not seem to share this broad definition.⁷¹ As the experiences in Timor-Leste and Bosnia will show in the next chapter, the reality in peace operations is that these ambiguous relationships are relatively common and pose challenges to the development of appropriate responses by international organizations, to the international community’s capacity to achieve its goals, and to its perceived credibility within host communities.

Putting aside questions of the appropriate regulation of transactional and other relationships between consenting adults, it is clear that transactional sex economies arise in situations of poverty and insecurity, where wars have contributed to the dissolution of the social, familial, and economic structures that might provide protection from exploitation, especially for children. Jane Holl Lute, as the assistant UN secretary-general for peacekeeping operations, said that her “operating presumption is that

this is either an ongoing or potential problem in every single one of our missions.”⁷² Because the economic push factors for survival sex are high in many peace operations, some interveners have interpreted transactional sex and the associated relationships as being driven by local women, who “enthusiastically” compete to attract peacekeepers.⁷³ However, it is evident that the underlying structural conditions of poverty and the unequal power dynamics between interveners and locals creates a permissive environment in which transactional sex economies can thrive. As Sarah Spencer argues, in the context of the distorted power dynamics present in conflict, the expression of agency involved in exchanging sex for material goods or protection masks the fact that “these exploitative circumstances do not involve real choices” and it can cause harm for the locals involved.⁷⁴ Regardless, despite being prohibited by the zero tolerance bulletin, not all transactional sex is criminal; it is only criminal when it involves children or when it involves prostitution in jurisdictions where national laws prohibit it.

Networked Abuse and Exploitation

One of the most alarming revelations that emerged from the international interventions in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s was the involvement of peacekeepers and associated personnel in the sex trafficking of women from neighboring countries into Kosovo and Bosnia. Just as the arrival of peacekeepers in Cambodia vastly increased the demand for sex “services,” so too did the arrival of the international intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo drive a rapid expansion of the sex industry. International personnel, particularly soldiers from the Stabilisation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR), accounted for an estimated 70 percent of the profits made from prostitution in Bosnia and an estimated 30 to 50 percent of the clients in brothels, and it is estimated that the vast majority of women working in brothels patronized by interveners were trafficked.⁷⁵ International personnel—particularly American DynCorp private contractors deployed as the US contribution to the UN peace operation’s police component, but also other military and police peacekeepers—were implicated in the use of prostitutes, in trafficking women to work in brothels, in purchasing women and girls as sex slaves, and, in some cases, in purchasing illegal weapons from brothel owners and covering up illegal activities.⁷⁶

There is even evidence that UN peacekeepers patronized brothels being operated out of Serb-run concentration camps outside Sarajevo during the war.⁷⁷ Officials have testified that there was no “legitimate” sex industry separate from trafficking and forced prostitution, and that that fact was “not acknowledged or [was] disregarded by many UN peacekeepers who involved themselves with prostitution in Bosnia. Others knowingly become deeply involved in the sex slave trade in partnership with organized crime.”⁷⁸ Similar accounts of trafficking and sex slavery emerged in relation to Kosovo Force (KFOR) personnel, and in both Kosovo and Bosnia, evidence suggests that neither sex trafficking nor forced prostitution was an issue before the arrival of international interveners.⁷⁹ It is important to note that research has shown that peacekeeping economies like this tend to outlast peacekeeping operations, “shaping gendered economic and social power relations in the long term” and embedding sex work and trafficking in the postwar economy.⁸⁰ The primary research conducted in Timor-Leste and Bosnia, discussed in the following chapters, will illuminate this particular point further.

The connection with criminal networks makes this form of sexual misconduct distinct from transactional sex. Interveners not only interact with middlemen or criminal networks to access the women (as distinct from the more direct negotiations that characterize transactional sex) but may also be engaged in profit-making themselves through their interaction with these networks. For instance, Italian peacekeepers allegedly ran child prostitution rings from their barracks in Sarajevo, while Ukrainian peacekeepers supplemented their small income by smuggling alcohol, contraband, and women and setting up a brothel that was largely patronized by other peacekeepers.⁸¹ In Eritrea, a peacekeeper from the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea was found guilty of producing pornographic movies with a local woman, and in Somalia Belgian soldiers allegedly bought a teenage girl as a birthday present for a paratrooper and forced her to perform a sexualized show and have sex with two soldiers.⁸² In Timor-Leste, the increased demand for sex services after the arrival of the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) led to the emergence of an internationalized sex industry, with women being trafficked from Thailand, China, and other regional states.⁸³ This suggests that even where interveners themselves are not involved in trafficking, they may be implicated in networked sexual abuse and exploitation by virtue of patronizing brothels that “own” trafficked women.

The close links between this form of sexual misconduct by interveners and global criminal networks as well as the extensive coordination involved in these trades distinguishes this type of behavior from the others discussed. The centrality of profit-making, either by interveners or the networks they become entangled with, and the planned nature of this form of misconduct is crucial to understanding why it has been so prevalent in international interventions and what factors create the permissive environments in which it has flourished.

Why Do Different Forms of Sexual Misconduct Emerge?

This analysis of the forms that sexual exploitation and abuse take in peace operations demonstrates that incidences of misconduct are distinguishable on the basis of the extent to which they were perpetrated opportunistically, there was a level of negotiation or transaction involved, they were connected to profit-oriented criminal networks, or they were sadistic and planned. What is also clear from this discussion is that while there is great variation between these four general forms of misconduct, there are some areas of overlap—such as the blurry line between transactional sex and opportunistic rape, which is complicated even further by often opaque and inconsistent investigative and recording processes. However, paradoxically, it also suggests that the differences between these behaviors are perhaps greater than the overarching descriptor sexual exploitation and abuse suggests: while they are all united by the sexual nature of the behaviors involved, the behaviors are only loosely related in practice—rape is a world away from negotiated, consensual transactional sex, even in a context of unequal power dynamics, and sex trafficking for personal profit is markedly different from sadistic sexual torture.

In the following chapters, one of the questions I will consider is whether these different forms of sexual misconduct have had different impacts on peacebuilding outcomes, and on the international community's capacity and credibility in peace operations. For now, however, it is important to consider what factors give rise to these various forms of sexually exploitative and abusive behaviors.

A range of contextual factors is often mobilized in order to rationalize the perpetration of sexual exploitation and abuse by interveners in peace operations. For instance, officials and policymakers point variously

to the difficult deployment conditions for peacekeepers, the lack of recreational facilities, inadequate rest and recuperation provisions, and sometimes simply the assertion that “boys will be boys” and that soldiers deployed into such difficult conditions need to destress somehow, echoing Akashi’s statements in Cambodia.⁸⁴ The corollary of this is that sometimes standing orders relating to fraternization, alcohol consumption, and curfews—or, more recently, increasing the proportion of women deployed to peace operations—are presented as ways to limit sexual exploitation and abuse.⁸⁵ Nordås and Rustad’s analysis of thirty-six peace operations between 1999 and 2010 identified a range of other contextual factors that increase the likelihood of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers.⁸⁶ These include a history of high levels of conflict-related sexual violence, lower economic development (which increases the push factors for transactional sex), and the deployment of peace operations into contexts with lower levels of battle-related deaths (possibly because peacekeepers deployed into such contexts have greater interaction with local populations than those deployed into contexts with higher levels of battle-related deaths, which are normally subject to stricter security arrangements). Moreover, they found that misconduct was more likely to occur in larger operations, possibly because of the challenges such operations face with regard to monitoring and controlling soldiers. This finding is echoed by Stephen Moncrief’s analysis of sexual exploitation and assault allegations from 2007 to 2014, which suggested that disciplinary breakdowns at the peacekeeping mission’s lower levels of command are associated with higher levels of sexual misconduct.⁸⁷ Keith Allred has linked the perpetration of sexual misconduct to the perception among peacekeepers that they have immunity from prosecution, which derives from the jurisdictional arrangements between TCCs, the UN, and the host country.⁸⁸

My analysis above reiterates the relevance of many of these contextual factors, showing that the presence of large displaced civilian populations, a context of conflict-related sexual violence, the separation of families, and the breakdown of normal social safety nets may increase vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse. It also highlights the roles played by peacekeeping economies that are based on material inequality between interveners and locals and the particular vulnerabilities women and children face in such contexts. The presence of existing criminal networks may also contribute. However, these contextual factors alone cannot

explain the pervasiveness and patterns of sexual misconduct by interveners in peace operations.

The sexual nature of the behaviors that the category “sexual exploitation and abuse” encompasses, along with the fact that they are perpetrated predominantly, if not exclusively, by men, suggests that they are underpinned by constructs of gender that make the sexual abuse and exploitation of locals an important element of the performance of masculinity among male interveners in peace operations. By understanding sexual violence as an act related to social power and by locating gender practices as embedded within “a historically located hierarchical system of differentiation which privileges those defined as masculine at the expense of those defined as feminine,” we can see that sexual exploitation and abuse as a practice is irrevocably tied up with gendered power dynamics and performances of masculinity.⁸⁹ This view is bolstered by accounts by peacekeepers themselves: peacekeepers have told researchers that they need to prove they are not homosexual by “going out and getting a woman,” that disciplining soldiers for sexual harassment “[limits] the military’s capacity to produce effective soldiers,” and that they need to “satisfy” their sex drives as a fundamental component of their masculinity.⁹⁰ Moreover, it may be that the traditionally civilian tasks that soldiers are now being asked to perform in contemporary multidimensional peace operations—in contrast to the combat roles they are conditioned for—contribute to undermining their sense of identity as soldiers and give rise to behaviors including the sexual exploitation and abuse of the local population or the harassment or abuse of other members or units of the UN mission.⁹¹ In this vein, Karim and Beardsley have argued that the militarization processes inherent to peace operations produce gender power imbalances, which in turn manifest as acts of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.⁹² Scholars have also demonstrated how the production of hegemonic masculinities more generally in contemporary society embeds the dominant position of men over women, thereby facilitating sexual violence even outside of militarized contexts—for instance, as perpetrated by aid workers in the cases discussed above.⁹³ However, as Paul Kirby has shown, understanding gender orders and structures such as masculinity or patriarchy as being causally responsible for the perpetration of sexual misconduct may inadvertently mask both the individual and collective moral responsibility for it: individual men make choices about their sexual behaviors, and groups

can act as bystanders, facilitators, and beneficiaries of those behaviors.⁹⁴ It is therefore necessary to go beyond a gender analysis to understand the broader range of factors that can help explain the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations.

Marsha Henry's analysis of peacekeeper misconduct highlights the range of explanations that have been marshaled to explain conflict-related sexual violence and military prostitution in feminist scholarship: military cultures, the politics of race in civilian-military relations, the role of international relations and international governments in perpetuating systems of military prostitution, the economies shaped by military presence, and the intersection of interests between international and local actors in the control of women's sexuality and bodies.⁹⁵ Most of these were also apparent in the analysis above of the different types of sexual misconduct in peace operations, which demonstrated that permissive factors are distinguishable in each of the types of behavior examined. Opportunistic sexual assault is facilitated by the intersection of military cultures, gendered norms of sexual behavior, and the unregulated situations into which peacekeepers are deployed. Transactional sex economies develop in the context of deprivation, poverty, and material inequality between interveners and locals, where survival sex is seen by civilians as a way to secure basic needs. Networked abuse and exploitation occurs in an unregulated profit-seeking context where criminal trafficking or prostitution networks exist and can prosper by co-opting interveners in their operations—and is backstopped by the long and institutionalized history of military prostitution. As Cynthia Enloe has argued, "There is nothing inherent in international peacekeeping operations that makes soldiers immune to the sort of sexism that has fuelled military prostitution in wartime and peacetime."⁹⁶ And the sadistic, planned instances of sexual abuse appear driven by opportunism, the perversions of individuals working in unregulated environments, and the shadows of colonial violence. In her analysis of this last form of sexual abuse as perpetrated by Canadian peacekeepers in Somalia, Sherene Razack argued that the racialized and sexualized violence bore the hallmarks of a colonial encounter, and in a later study she found such violence to be ubiquitous to peace operations "from Somalia to Bosnia" and posits it as the product of latent coloniality in the peacekeeping project.⁹⁷ Henry has similarly shown that the "racial

features and colonial power relations of the peacekeeping encounter” are crucial to understanding sexual exploitation an abuse by peacekeepers more broadly, particularly in relation to transactional sex or networked exploitation.⁹⁸ The relevance of coloniality is underlined by the explanation given by the French MONUC civilian peacekeeper who admitted to having sex with twenty-four underage girls in 2004—he said, “Over there, the colonial spirit persists. The white man gets what he wants.”⁹⁹

By moving beyond a gender analysis, we can see that a range of local, international, normative, and systemic factors intersect with gender orders and structures to create the conditions under which sexual misconduct is perpetrated in a number of distinguishable forms. This indicates that particular contexts do not directly cause particular types of misconduct, but rather the conditions for all four types of sexual exploitation and abuse coexist in most peacekeeping (and humanitarian emergency) contexts: it is the way the local, international, normative, and systemic factors interact with one another and with peacekeeping operations that gives rise to the quite distinct forms misconduct takes and the varying levels of perpetration in particular contexts. Understanding these intersections and interactions is crucial to developing robust policy responses that are responsive to the various forms of sexual misconduct, and, more important for this book, to understanding the impacts such behavior has on peacebuilding outcomes.

Intersecting Issues: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, and Sexual Harassment and Abuse

One of the most striking things that this analysis of the nature and causes of sexual exploitation and abuse by interveners illuminates is the parallels and interconnections between sexual misconduct and conflict-related sexual violence, and between sexual misconduct and harassment and abuse within the intervener community. Unpacking these connections helps us understand more about the role contextual factors play in amplifying vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse as well as the ways different actors (i.e., military and civilian) perpetrate it in different ways, with different permissive or causal factors at work. This in turn provides a more

robust foundation from which to investigate first the impacts of sexual misconduct on peacebuilding outcomes, and second the ways in which policy responses might better address the issue.

Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

Conflict-related sexual violence, according to the UN, encompasses any act of “rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is linked, directly or indirectly (temporally, geographically or causally) to a conflict.”¹⁰⁰ In practice, this means that perpetrators tend to be affiliated with an armed group or entity that is party to the conflict, that the victims tend to be an actual or perceived member of a persecuted minority or opposing group, and that the act of conflict-related sexual violence takes place either in a conflict context or in an conflict-adjacent context such as a displacement camp. It also encompasses human trafficking for sexual exploitation committed in situations of conflict. Crucially, although the majority of victims of conflict-related sexual violence are women and girls, there is a growing awareness of the scale of such violence against men and boys in conflicts as well.¹⁰¹

As discussed earlier in this chapter, acts of sexual violence by soldiers may be perpetrated strategically, as weapons of war, but they may also be perpetrated opportunistically or as practices of war that are tolerated—or sometimes even encouraged—by political or military leadership for a variety of reasons. The discussion above about opportunistic sexual abuse by interveners demonstrates that there are clear similarities between conflict-related sexual violence and some forms of sexual exploitation and abuse; the primary difference is that conflict-related sexual violence is perpetrated as part of a conflict, whereas sexual exploitation and abuse is perpetrated by interveners as part of a peace process, albeit one that occurs in the context of violent conflicts where conflict-related sexual violence is often common. In fact, some have suggested that sexual exploitation and abuse should be seen as a form of conflict-related sexual violence and addressed within the same conceptual and policy frameworks.¹⁰² There are, however, risks in subsuming sexual exploitation and abuse responses under conflict-related sexual violence frameworks

and policies. First, in order to develop effective policy responses, our understanding of these connected but different forms of violence must be robust and dynamic. Lumping peacekeepers and aid workers who engage in sexual exploitation and abuse into the same category as soldiers or rebels who engage in sexual violence is problematic as it papers over (a) the very real differences in the nature of the actors involved (those whose mandate is warmaking and those whose mandate is peacemaking), (b) the somewhat different factors that contribute to perpetration, and (c) the policy responses required. Second, victims' accounts suggest that the violence carries with it different meanings when perpetrated by those who have been sent to protect. One victim's advocate in Timor-Leste, when describing the differences between the well documented conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by Indonesian soldiers during the twenty-four-year occupation of Timor-Leste and the (admittedly rare) cases of rape by peacekeepers, told me, "We knew the Indonesian soldiers hated us, we didn't think that the peacekeepers did too."¹⁰³ While it is important not to collapse sexual exploitation and abuse under the umbrella of conflict-related sexual violence, I think that there are some very important intersections between the two that help explain the way the latter creates and consolidates the factors of vulnerability, as well as the permissive causal factors, that contribute to the perpetration of sexual misconduct by interveners in peace operations.

Earlier in this chapter, the story of thirteen-year old Faela in the Democratic Republic of Congo showed how the prior experience of conflict-related sexual violence could lead to displacement, isolation from family networks, and pregnancy, which make young women particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse when interveners arrive as part of a peace operation. Rape and other forms of sexual assault—whether opportunistic or preplanned—have received perhaps the greatest amount of attention in the literature on conflict-related sexual violence, likely due to the high prevalence of this form of sexual violence. In many cases, they have similar impacts to those described by Faela: a global overview of conflict-related sexual violence between 1987 and 2007 found that sexual violence has serious socioeconomic implications for survivors, as a result of stigmatization by and marginalization in their communities.¹⁰⁴ The report found that this could lead to poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion, all of which make survivors particularly vulnerable to sexual

exploitation and human trafficking more broadly. Furthermore, it found that conflict-related sexual violence is one of the factors that can exacerbate the prevalence of violence within families, including sexual violence, which may also fracture community and family ties and lead to stigmatization and victims leaving their families. There are also structural implications that may increase vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse by interveners: impunity for conflict-related sexual violence can consolidate a tolerance of such acts against women and children, which can be a further permissive factor for such misconduct by interveners.¹⁰⁵ A number of the victims whose voices were included earlier in this chapter suggested that once they “lost” their “honor” as a result of conflict-related sexual violence, they sought out transactional sex with interveners as a way to address their poverty because they had nothing left to lose. All of these socioeconomic and structural implications are, of course, in addition to the often grave and long-term consequences conflict-related sexual violence can have for victims’ physical and psychological health.

What this shows is the importance of understanding the broader factors and processes that create the conditions under which certain individuals or groups are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse or exploitation by interveners when a peace operation is deployed. These will be crucial both to understanding whether the impacts of sexual exploitation and abuse by interveners compounds the personal, social, and structural impacts of previous abuses and violations and to the development of effective prevention mechanisms based on the particular vulnerabilities at play in specific contexts.

Sexual Harassment and Abuse within the Humanitarian Sector

The second issue that intersects with sexual exploitation and abuse by interveners and that can help shed light on the factors contributing to its perpetration is sexual harassment and abuse within the intervener community. Despite the commonly held assumption that sexual misconduct is perpetrated primarily by military peacekeepers, the evidence available shows that while military peacekeepers are more responsible overall for allegations of misconduct, civilian peacekeepers are more responsible per capita for allegations.¹⁰⁶ This reflects the far greater numbers of military personnel deployed in a peace operation, but it also raises an important

question about how we can understand the perpetration of sexual exploitation and abuse by civilian interveners in contrast to that perpetrated by military interveners. Comprehensive data on the perpetration of sexual misconduct by non-UN civilian staff is not available, which is one of the reasons that this particular aspect of the phenomenon is so under-studied.

However, sexual harassment and abuse by civilian interveners against their colleagues in the humanitarian community has been subject to some investigation and can help shed light on sexual misconduct perpetrated in parallel by the same group of interveners against local communities. A number of surveys have been conducted on the experiences of aid workers in relation to sexual harassment and assault.¹⁰⁷ These, along with growing media attention to stories of abuse against humanitarians, has meant that some victim testimony is available on the nature and perpetration of sexual harassment and abuse by interveners against their colleagues and the factors that underpin such behaviors. My analysis here will look at these issues in turn before reflecting on the broader implications of this particular set of sexually inappropriate behaviors for our understanding of sexual misconduct by civilian interveners in peace operations. It is worth noting that, while there are some accounts of abuse by uniformed peacekeepers against their civilian and military counterparts, the bulk of information available on this issue relates to abuse and harassment perpetrated by civilian peacekeepers and other civilian interveners against their civilian colleagues. This does not necessarily reflect prevalence but rather the constraints of collecting more comprehensive data on this phenomenon. Furthermore, while female humanitarians have faced sexual harassment and assault at the hands of local men not associated with peace operations or humanitarian organizations, this falls outside the purview of this book as it does not relate to sexual exploitation and abuse by interveners but rather speaks to the prevalence of sexual violence globally in general and the particular vulnerabilities facing women working in conflict contexts.¹⁰⁸

In July 2015, the *Guardian* published a short article by Megan Nobert, who recounted that while working for a humanitarian organization in South Sudan she was drugged and raped by a fellow member of the humanitarian community, who was working for a subcontractor employed by a UN agency.¹⁰⁹ The response to Nobert's assault was poor, due to a range of factors including the inadequacy of legal or administrative frameworks

to address assault by an employee of a UN subcontractor, the absence of a useful local accountability framework, inadequate response processes by her employer, and what seemed to be the unwillingness of the UN's Office of Internal Oversight to investigate the case before significant media pressure developed.¹¹⁰ As a result, Nobert set up the NGO Report the Abuse, to collect accounts of sexual violence against humanitarians and promote the development of better policies and mechanisms to address such violence within organizations and at the global level. Around the same time, the Humanitarian Women's Network and the Feinstein International Centre were investigating the same issues, conducting broad surveys of women's experiences of sexual harassment and abuse while on deployment in peace operations. More recently, the UN secretary-general commissioned a survey on sexual harassment within the UN, which was conducted by Deloitte and released in early 2019. The testimonies and data collected, along with the ad hoc media reporting on sexual harassment and abuse experienced by humanitarians, illuminate a few key themes that are of use in our understanding of sexual misconduct by civilian interveners against local populations, given that they relate to the same broad group of perpetrators.

The first trend that emerges is the pervasiveness of sexual harassment and, to a slightly lesser extent, sexual aggression and assault against female humanitarians by other interveners while on mission. It is worth noting that the behaviors reported fall under these more limited categories rather than the broader set of categories described above in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse. I have not come across cases of sexual exploitation or transactional sex in the evidence available; this may reflect gaps in the data, but I suspect it reflects the different circumstances and vulnerabilities that expatriate female humanitarians face, in comparison with those faced by local women and children, or even their national staff counterparts. Moreover, sexual harassment falls outside the boundaries of what is considered sexual exploitation and abuse in the zero-tolerance policy, and in most organizations is dealt with under a completely separate policy framework, although, as chapter 2 will show, some host communities see it as part and parcel of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Since Nobert's story of her rape broke in international media, it has become clear that, although horrifying, her experience was not unique. Other female aid workers have since recounted similar stories, including

being drugged or plied with alcohol and then raped by their boss or colleagues; being forced to perform oral sex on colleagues; being raped by a colleague while on the way to the latrine when on assignment in a community; fighting off colleagues attempting to assault them at parties, hotels, or in their shared homes; being so scared of colleagues that they slept with a cricket bat for safety; having male colleagues from other organizations enter their tent while they slept and rape them; and being fired after reporting being raped by colleagues.¹¹¹ In addition to these accounts of sexual assault, myriad accounts of sexual harassment were documented, including women being promised jobs in return for sex, being groped or touched inappropriately both at work and in social contexts by colleagues, or experiencing verbal sexual harassment.¹¹² In all of these anecdotes, women reported experiencing this behavior primarily from male colleagues in their organization but also from men working with other civilian agencies and organizations in their country of deployment—in only a few cases did women specify that the man involved was a local staff member; in most cases they referred to international staff. So, anecdotally, it appears that many humanitarian women experience sexual harassment and assault at the hands of fellow international interveners, but what information do we have about the prevalence of these behaviors within intervener communities?

The Humanitarian Women's Network surveyed of over one thousand women working in the humanitarian field, covering respondents from seventy organizations across the NGO, UN, and private sectors.¹¹³ The survey found that over two thirds of women had experienced some form of sexual harassment, and that of these, over half reported that it came from a male supervisor. Furthermore, around half had experienced sexual aggression and/or assault, with 4 percent reporting they had been raped.¹¹⁴ Respondents reported that male colleagues committed all of these acts, and one third of women reported that the perpetrator was a male supervisor, highlighting the relevance of power in our understanding of sexually inappropriate behaviors. It is important to note that although international and national staff were equally represented in respondents reporting rape, national staff reported more cases of multiple experiences of rape than their international counterparts.¹¹⁵ The vast majority of cases reported across all categories took place in missions in sub-Saharan Africa. The scale of sexual harassment and abuse suggested by the

Humanitarian Women's Network survey is broadly corroborated by the survey conducted by Report the Abuse with over 1400 respondents, 96 percent of whom were international humanitarian staff. Of those respondents, nearly three quarters had experienced sexual violence, nearly 90 percent knew a colleague who had experienced such violence, and the vast majority knew and worked with their attacker.¹¹⁶ The 2019 Deloitte study of individuals working in the UN system and related entities globally found somewhat different results, which is understandable given the different nature of the survey—unlike the other surveys discussed, the 2019 survey included both men and women and included only those within the UN system. There were 30,364 respondents, which represented 17 percent of all relevant personnel, and there was an almost equal representation of men and women. Nearly 39 percent of respondents had experienced some form of sexual harassment while working with the UN. Women were 1.7 times more likely to report experiencing sexual harassment, while transgender, binary gender non-conforming, and those who identified as “other” were 2.1 times more likely to report sexual harassment. Although this survey finds a lower rate of experiences of harassment among women than previous studies that included respondents from both the UN and other organizations, that rate was nonetheless high, at approximately 42 percent of respondents.¹¹⁷

These statistics are helpful, although their opt-in nature and methodological limitations mean that they cannot be generalized to aid workers who did not respond to the surveys. Nevertheless, they do suggest, in conjunction with media reports on this issue, that sexual harassment and abuse by male humanitarian workers against their female colleagues is a pervasive issue in the context of peace operations. This has severe consequences not only for the women directly involved but also for the humanitarian community as a result of women opting to leave this field of work to avoid future harassment and abuse.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, this data demonstrates that sexually abusive behaviors are not solely the purview of soldiers deployed into peace operations; rather, they are perpetrated extensively also by international humanitarian staff against their colleagues, both international and national. It is unsurprising, then, that the UN data mentioned earlier shows that civilian personnel in peace operations are also responsible for high rates of sexual exploitation and abuse against local communities.

The second trend that emerges from the data available on sexual harassment and abuse within intervener communities is that systems for responding to these behaviors are inadequate. This data helps shed light on why so little information is available about the perpetration of sexual exploitation and abuse by civilian personnel, why many civilian humanitarians may decide not to report suspected sexual misconduct by colleagues against local populations, and why individuals with long histories of inappropriate sexual behaviors may continue to work in the sector without being held accountable for their actions.

Of the women who responded to the Humanitarian Women's Network survey, 69 percent did not report the harassment, aggression, or assault they experienced at the hands of colleagues for a range of reasons that include concern about professional consequences, the feeling that it was not "serious" or "violent" enough to report, a lack of trust in the system and those in positions to respond, and the paucity of reporting mechanisms and appropriate evidentiary standards, as well as shame, fear of reprisals by their aggressor, or the instruction not to report because of cultural considerations.¹¹⁹ Report the Abuse, the Feinstein International Centre, and Deloitte found similar reasons for low reporting rates—the latter also found that a sexist or misogynistic work setting, patterns of victim-blaming, and failures to take allegations seriously contribute to low reporting rates and that victims often only choose to report harassment and abuse if they are confident that accountability mechanisms are trustworthy and proper medical and psychological care will be provided.¹²⁰ It is not a great leap to assume that similar factors prevent the reporting of abuse perpetrated by civilian interveners against local individuals.

Perhaps most surprisingly, when Report the Abuse conducted a review of the policies of ninety-two UN agencies, INGOs, and governmental bodies, it found that only 16 percent of them had any strategy, policy, or procedures to respond to sexual violence against their employees; this underscores why so many victims opt out of formal reporting processes.¹²¹ Furthermore, of those who did formally report abuse and harassment, most were unsatisfied with the responses: in nearly half of the cases, nothing happened; in only 10 percent of cases were women given social support or referred for psychological support; and in 22 percent of cases women reported suffering negative professional consequences themselves as a consequence of reporting.¹²² These issues that discourage reporting

suggest that there is an underlying problem with the way organizations understand the nature and impact of sexual harassment and abuse on their employees. In fact, existing prevention strategies, including training and security advice, largely place the onus on women themselves for minimizing the risks they may face while on deployment, despite the fact that the causes of such abuse and harassment have little to do with the choices women themselves make.¹²³ The cultural and organizational factors that result in organizations responding to sexually abusive and inappropriate behaviors by staff against colleagues in this way likely function in similar ways to prevent the establishment and maintenance of robust prevention and accountability mechanisms for sexual exploitation and abuse by interveners against local communities.

This foreshadows the final trend that emerges from the data and literature on sexual harassment within intervener communities, which relates to the contextual factors that create environments in which such behaviors flourish and are perpetrated also against local communities. These do, in many ways, mirror the factors discussed above in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse by interveners, suggesting that these behaviors are two sides of the same coin. In their anonymous account of sexual abuse and harassment, three women aid workers argued that

What makes female humanitarians particularly vulnerable to abuse is the fact that we work, socialise, and live with our co-workers; we live in volatile environments where laws and rules are broken regularly, and expatriates can often act with impunity. We're far removed from normal society, and some men seem to be emboldened to behave in ways they never would at home. In many places where we work, legal justice and accountability rarely occur because the structures simply do not exist.¹²⁴

The authors also highlight that factors like isolation, lack of communication, cultural clashes, long work hours, and alcohol and drugs contribute to creating an environment where harassment and abuse happens. Dyan Mazurana and Phoebe Donnelly confirmed these suggestions in their extensive qualitative research on the issue, identifying three key environmental factors.¹²⁵ First, they found that sexism, machismo, and male domination in the humanitarian sector, which fosters a “boys will be boys” culture, is critical to creating environments in which sexual

harassment and abuse of colleagues is so pervasive. Second, the broader environment into which humanitarian operations are deployed—in which there is often a breakdown of law and order and a prevalence of sexual assaults against women more broadly—contributes to these behaviors. And lastly, the high rates of alcohol and drug consumption and associated party culture, which are often used as stress-relief mechanisms for aid workers, create contexts in which women are particularly vulnerable to abuse and harassment.

These three trends are illuminating not only in relation to sexual harassment and abuse within the intervener community but also in terms of understanding sexual misconduct perpetrated by male civilian interveners against local communities. First, the cultures that facilitate such pervasive sexual harassment within organizations will not stop at the boundaries of those organizations, and it is conceivable that perpetrators are likely to also treat local women in similar ways. Interviews in Timor-Leste suggested this was the case and that there was a widespread culture of street harassment of local women in particular, by both military and civilian interveners, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Second, many women who recounted their experiences in the studies discussed above mentioned a culture of transactional sex, in particular commercial sex, with locals as part of their accounts of sexual harassment and abuse by male colleagues. Third, if reporting and accountability mechanisms are so poor in relation to abuse and harassment within organizations and given the structural and cultural factors noted above that further undermine responses, it is unsurprising that the very same organizations have trouble ensuring accountability for sexual misconduct perpetrated by their staff against locals. And finally, what this analysis shows is that the broader normative, cultural, and gendered factors that can explain sexual exploitation and abuse by military interveners are relevant also to understanding the factors that give rise to sexual misconduct by civilian interveners, both against local populations and against the people with whom they work—or, in other words, against their fellow interveners.

What is particularly useful about this information—despite the fact that it is limited—is that it is the first step in filling in a major gap in our understanding of sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations. Significant scholarly and policy attention has been devoted to understanding why soldiers perpetrate sexual violence. This has produced valuable

theoretical and conceptual frames through which we can make sense of sexual misconduct by military personnel in peace operations—for instance, by understanding the pressures and incentives created by militarized masculinities and the legacy of military prostitution. We do not, however, have a well-developed conceptual framework for understanding sexual misconduct perpetrated by civilian personnel, and this is partly because the data on sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations is patchy and difficult to disaggregate, especially when considering nonpeacekeeping civilian personnel, such as those working in humanitarian organizations or as diplomats in the host state. Although it is beyond the purview of this book to develop such a conceptual framework in relation to sexual misconduct by civilian interveners, the analysis above makes some important first steps by drawing the links and identifying parallels between these different forms of sexually inappropriate and abusive behaviors and by indicating some of the permissive and/or causal factors that give rise to them. Being aware of the fact that civilian interveners are at least equally implicated in sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations is critical to setting up adequate prevention and accountability mechanisms and to understanding the implications of misconduct by this group of interveners on peacebuilding outcomes, which is considered in the next chapter.

This chapter has shown that sexual exploitation and abuse encompasses a broad set of behaviors that are perpetrated by the range of interveners associated with peace operations. Understanding the variety of forms the category encompasses, the intersections between this category and other forms of sexual violence and abuse, and the contextual, normative, and systemic factors that give rise to them is crucial to understanding also the impacts such behaviors have on the individuals involved, the peace operations in question, and the broader capacity and credibility of the international community in peace operations. It is also critical to understanding the ways in which sexual misconduct overlaps and intersects with other peacekeeping challenges, how it can better be addressed, and why policy responses have not resulted in robust prevention and accountability mechanisms. The rest of this book is devoted to answering these questions.