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**'Must Boys Be Boys?': Confronting  
Sexual Exploitation and  
Abuse in UN Peacekeeping Operations**

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# 'Must Boys Be Boys?': Confronting Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peacekeeping Operations

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**Sarah Martin:** I'll start by telling you a little about my work. The organization I work with is Refugees International, an independent, small NGO based in Washington, D.C. We are an advocacy organization. That means we don't implement programs, we don't give money to anyone, we just purely do advocacy as such. Thus, it is crucial that we remain independent and able to speak out about what we see, so we don't accept funding from the United Nations, the US government, or any government. There are twenty of us in the organization. I am one of the eight people who do the fieldwork and the research, and my official title is "Advocate." To adopt the UN lingo, I am the "gender focal point."

Tonight I'm going to talk about the most recent report that I wrote, *Must Boys Be Boys?* (You can download it off our website at [www.refugeesinternational.org](http://www.refugeesinternational.org).) In general, we don't do long reports. Instead, we usually do two-page policy bulletins because our mandate, we believe, is to take the voice of the least powerful -- generally refugees and displaced people, a large percentage of who are women -- and bring them to the voices of the most powerful -- the policy makers at the United Nations, the US government, and other governments around the world. We write two-page bulletins because everybody is so busy. The bulletins end with pointed recommendations for change, so that we can go back and check to see if they have actually been done. You can find all of our information on the web. I hope that some of it can be useful to you in your studies, and that we can get some of this information out there.

I went to West Africa for the first time in October 2003, almost three months after Charles Taylor stepped down and went to Nigeria. We went when the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was at about five thousand troops and stationed just around Monrovia. They had come in -- mostly they had been transferred from Sierra Leone -- and were spread out right around Monrovia, securing the airport, the port, and the main city. The bulk of the population at this time was gathered in IDP camps, Internally Displaced Persons Camps, ringing the capital.

We flew in from Abidjan on a Guinean airplane called UTA, which we dubbed "unlikely to arrive." It was one of those old Russian planes, where two guys slap some spit on the propellers and off we go. There were only six people on the flight. My colleague Michelle and I -- we travel in pairs for safety reasons -- two Nigerian businessmen, and two Ukrainian women who were each about nineteen years old. They were wearing rather revealing, sexy clothing, and I was really curious; I was naïve. Why are they going to Liberia, I thought. Maybe they're visiting their boyfriends, who are peacekeepers there? I'm a nosy person by nature, that's why I'm good at this job -- so, I kind of sidled up to them while we were pulling out their exit visas, to see where they were from and what they were doing. They were in the company of a man who appeared to be Moroccan or Arabic. He kept their passports, and filled out their exit visa forms for them, which

said that they were both Ukrainian. We got onto the plane, and when we landed in Monrovia, I never saw them again.

Now, the population of internationals at that time was quite low. We had five thousand troops, most of whom were stationed right around there, and the UN was just barely starting to deploy. So I didn't think that much about it. Learning was my first mission -- I was busy going to the IDP camps, and overwhelmed by what I was seeing in Monrovia. My particular interest and passion is around gender-based violence, so one of the last days I was there, I went to go talk to a gender-based violence expert (GBV) at the International Rescue Committee (IRC). I was asking what kind of services they were providing, and what they were seeing -- I was trying to get an idea of the number of women who had been assaulted during the war. But while we were talking about that, she asked, "Why don't we have a drink tonight? We can meet at a hotel bar, or do you want to go to the Sugar Bush?" I asked, "What's the Sugar Bush?" She replied, "Well, I shouldn't go there because I'm a GBV person. It's kind of a brothel bar where they have belly dancing, but that's where everyone goes."

We didn't go there that night, which I eternally regret because it closed down soon after. Instead, she explained to me about the problems they were seeing was because of the UN peacekeepers -- that the peacekeepers were a draw. All the people who had been trafficking arms, diamonds, and drugs, coming in and out of Liberia and Sierra Leone, had now found that it was cheaper and easier to just bring women in to work in the bordellos to service the UN peacekeepers. That was my entry into learning about this field.

MONUC (United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo) came to my attention in 2003, when it came to light in Bunia, Ituri, in the northwest part of the Congo, which borders Sudan and Uganda, was the most conflict ridden area. The UN peacekeepers were sent in there: Moroccans, Uruguayans, and some Jordanians. They were deployed to protect an airbase and the population, which was living in fear of the rebel groups operating there. At one point we counted, and there were twenty different rebel groups operating around that area. So people would flee and set up camp around the peacekeeping camps near the airport for protection and safety, hoping that they would be protected by the peacekeepers when the rebels went marauding through the town.. But it came to light that as well as failing to actively engage the rebel groups, the peacekeepers were actively preying on the population. We're talking about a desperately poor population -- mostly girls and women -- who have a very little food. The humanitarian agencies were not able to offer aid there because security was so poor. So the women were crawling out underneath the camps at night to sell themselves to the peacekeepers for a piece of bread, jam, a banana -- very, very small things. On top of that, I read the internal UN peacekeeping report, which went into much more horrific detail than the media reports. There were issues of small boys -- eight and nine year-olds -- selling their sisters to the peacekeepers. There was field right next to a church, where the guys would take a break and go into the fields to have sex with a young girl, then come back and return to duty. The world was shocked and horrified. These were guys that were sent to protect this vulnerable population, but instead were preying upon them. There was a lot of media attention around this and the rhetoric sounded to me, "Oh, it's got to be a

problem in the Congo; we heard that MONUC, the UN mission, has been infiltrated by pedophiles. The Congolese themselves don't see this as a problem; this is a Western thing to get upset about it."

I started thinking back to my initial experience in Liberia. I went to Liberia and Sierra Leone in February to assess the peacekeeping mission and determine whether UNAMSIL, the UN Mission in Sierra Leone, should reduce their troops if conditions were safe. The more and more I talked to people, the more I realized what a problem this was. In Liberia, I asked the Deputy SRSG (Special Representative to the Secretary General) -- the humanitarian deputy -- "Who would you report this to? Who do I go talk to in order to find out how many cases have been reported?" He answered, "Umm, the UNDP Gender officer? Here's her name." So I went to go talk to her, and she said, "No, no, no, that's not my job. Go talk to the UNMIL rights officer." So I went to talk to him, and he says, "Well, I've only been here two days and no one's told me that I'm supposed to do that. Why don't you go to talk to the Gender Advisor?"

So I go to find the Gender Advisor. I always find geography to be an interesting indicator. In this case, you walk *an hour and half* past the SRSG's office to find a small trailer, which is the Gender Office, staffed only by a UN volunteer—a very able, very talented twenty-eight year old woman who was doing her best she could, but this was not her job. She said, "I don't investigate these things. We rely upon the NGOs to tell us if there are any problems." Then I went to the GBV Protection Working Group meeting, and I asked them. This was the International NGOs, of which there are about thirty or forty at this time in Liberia. "How do you report this to the UN?" I asked. They said, "Well, I would tell someone I know..." There were a hundred different answers. Then I went to a local NGO Working Group meeting -- Liberians are incredibly organized, and there are like hundreds of local NGOs there. They just started telling me the stories of what they had seen. "There's checkpoint in front of Wilson Camp, and to your left there are four Nigerian soldiers. They've got a different girl everyday, little girls. Why are peacekeepers doing this to our children? Would they act like this in their own community?" To me, being a systems-oriented person with the mandate to identify problems and then come up with recommendations to solve them, the issue seemed obvious to me. How can you even know the depth of the problem if you have zero mechanisms to actually report it? How would a Liberian woman who had been victimized by a peacekeeper approach the UN to report this problem?

The more I went back to UN Mission in Liberia, the more I realized it's an impenetrable fortress. Although I was a savvy NGO worker with access to meetings, how would I actually approach them to talk about this? The first bulletin that I wrote was on sexual exploitation and abuse, and that there were no systems in place. The next one I wrote was on the issue of trafficking.

Jacques Paul Klein was the SRSG for Liberia. He had also been the SRSG in Bosnia. I don't know if any of you are familiar with what happened in Bosnia? I should just stop to give you a brief history of sexual exploitation and abuse at the UN. The first time we were really aware of the problem was in 1992, when the UN Mission in Cambodia was in place. They went from having 6,000 massage parlors to 25,000 sexual massage parlors in

a two-year period when the UN peacekeepers were there. When this was first brought out, there was a lot of concern expressed, including the idea that the peacekeepers had introduced HIV/AIDS into Cambodia. I myself don't actually believe that's true, as there are many other indicators and factors -- but that's the association that's followed the peacekeepers ever since. And the SRSG, when confronted with the issue, said "Well, boys will be boys" -- which is how I got the title for my report.

So it has been going on at least since 1992. One thing I always like to point out is that despite what some people think, this is not just a problem of developing countries' militaries. This is a problem in the US military as well. The US Department of Defense's Inspector General's 2004 Survey of the three military academies concluded that one in every seven female cadets had reported being a victim of sexual abuse in previous years and fifty percent of the women at the academies reported being sexually harassed. Further, the researchers found that the victims reported only a third of the instances of sexual misconduct. In 2004, the Department of Defense had 1275 allegations of assault by service members by fellow soldiers. Professor Madeleine Morris noted that the ratio of military rapes to civilian rapes was substantially larger than the ratio of other crimes, military to civilian. The Department of Defense knows this. My boss is Ken Baker, the former spokesperson for the Pentagon under the Clinton administration. Part of his job was dealing with the US military sexual scandals that kept popping up, such as Tailhook. The Department of Defense drafted a regulation in 2004 that would allow US troops to be subject to courts-martial for using prostitutes, in response to concerns that US troops were contributing to human trafficking in areas near their overseas bases. This is particularly a problem in Korea, from what we're hearing right now. So, before anyone gets into a frame of mind about "those terrible developing country troops abusing these women, it couldn't possibly happen here," I just want to put it in perspective; this is a problem that happens in militaries everywhere.

So Jacques Paul Klein, who was in charge in Bosnia in 2000, had to face the big scandal that the US rarely sends their own military for UN peacekeeping missions. Instead, if they choose to contribute people, they tend to do it through Private Military Contractors (PMCs). In particular, the State Department has used DynCorp as their contractor to send civilian police. In Bosnia, they were using DynCorp to send in mechanics and support staff to assist the NATO troops. It came to light that these contractors were purchasing women who had been trafficked in; 13 and 14 year old girls. When the whistleblowers talked about it, the whistleblowers were the ones that got fired. No one else was ever fired to my knowledge. (Peter Singer, who works at the Brookings Institute, has written a really interesting book about PMCs, called *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*, if you want to learn more about this issue.)

When Jacques Paul Klein became the new SRSG in Liberia, I went to talk to him about this corruption, and he said, "I take sexual exploitation and abuse very seriously. I have a zero tolerance policy." I said, "Great -- where are your records of the reports that have come in?" He answered, "Go talk to my focal point on sexual exploitation and abuse." (That's the UN's favorite term, "focal point.") Four months after that meeting I spoke with her, a French woman named Celhia de Lavarène, a former reporter who had worked with Klein in Bosnia and started a project there called STOP, Stop Trafficking of

Persons. As I later found out, this was quite a controversial program, because she would *bust* into brothels with cameramen and media to *rescue* women. Then she would bring them back and dump them on the doorstep of some NGO and say, basically, “All right now you take care of them, it’s your problem, I’ve done my job.” And as anyone who has studied trafficking knows, this is one of the worst ways to address the problem. Another problem with this program was that many of these brothels were personally owned by UN peacekeepers. When they were on the task force, they would alert others of possible raids, thus continuing the cycle of corruption. A lot of women’s groups I’ve talked to in Europe have alleged that Jacques Paul Klein swept this under the rug. What I can say for sure is that he appointed the same woman, about whom there were so many complaints from women’s organizations, to be the focal point on sexual exploitation and abuse in Liberia.

There, what she was doing was going into the clubs where peacekeepers go to hang out, and just taking pictures of them. So what was happening in response is that the peacekeepers would instead rent a house cheaply and have private parties, where she wasn’t invited. They would check at the door and not let her in. We wrote a bulletin that her trafficking program might actually be putting women at worse risk, rather than helping them, and called for her to be addressed. I came back to the UN to talk to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) there, and they were shocked -- they knew nothing about it. They had no idea that she had been hired. They soon started calling for her resignation, but Klein threw his weight around and she stayed put. In fact, an important thing to know about when you’re talking about peacekeeping is just how weak the central administration in New York is -- that most of the power happens out in the field. The missions are kind of autonomous and it’s almost like a feudal system out there.

Now, returning to what I said earlier – after the sexual abuse in MONUC scandal broke in 2003, I began to realize that this was happening in all the places I’ve been, and that there’s a well-known history of sexual exploitation and abuse in the UN peacekeeping missions. So for this study I decided that it would be better to focus on two countries where there hadn’t been a lot of media attention to the issue, countries I had visited often. Liberia is an interesting country because it was a completely failed state. Currently, it has the first woman president in Africa, but at the time the UN was the government there, we had problems with trafficking, and zero systems to report it. And every time you’d raise the issue with someone, they’d say, “Look, Liberia has got bigger problems to worry about than this. This is not a big deal.” Now, to put that in context, this is a country where, according to the most recent survey I’ve seen, up to sixty percent of the women suffered some form of gender-based violence during the conflict. And there are high levels of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). For example, in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process, they do a very brief health screening when the combatants go through the cantonment sites to be disarmed, and they found that 91% of the combatants had at least one STD. So in Liberia you’ve got a severely abused population, zero industry, and sanctions, so the little industry they have they can’t really use -the diamonds and the timber. The, you’ve got an influx of 15,000 men and no system to report any kind of abuse, so naturally there are abuses.

I want to briefly compare Liberia to Haiti, the police are so corrupt that a women's organization told me that a woman entering a police station was more likely to be raped than helped. Gangs also terrorize the neighborhoods; the gangs in Cité Soleil even keep the police out. Cité Soleil is a big sprawling slum in Port-au-Prince where terrible violence is erupting. It's ringed by the police because they don't dare go into it, so there is incredible corruption, violence, and drug trafficking running through there. Prostitution is illegal in Haiti, but if you go to Petionville in the very wealthy suburbs right above the up the mountains from Port-au-Prince, there are prostitutes on every corner. There are fabulous restaurants and bars in Petionville, and the internationals are in and out all the time. There are Haitian women on the arms of every man in Haiti and they're lined up outside trying to get some business, despite the fact that prostitution is illegal. In fact, I was even told that the government tries to tax prostitutes, despite prostitution being illegal.

While I was in Haiti in February 2005, they were starting to really pay attention to the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse. A month later, the UN put out a report by Prince Zeid of Jordan detailing the problem. A local news report came out from the Haitian media (Haiti has incredibly great media) that three Pakistani soldiers had raped a young deaf mute girl in Gonaïve. So the Gender Advisor in Haiti, who does a pretty good job, started an investigation. Her job wasn't to investigate herself, but to oversee it. When the investigators went out there, they found out that it wasn't rape, but a case of prostitution, as the girl had been sold to the Pakistani policemen by another Haitian woman. So I went to observe the press conference the next day, and see how they handled this. The public administration officers said, "It's good news, it wasn't rape, it was just prostitution." It became really evident to me that the UN has no idea of why sexual exploitation and abuse is bad. In Haiti, the peacekeepers are not allowed to bring their civilian clothes with them; they have to be in military uniform at all times. I have a picture in my report from when I went to the beach one day with the Chilean troops and there are all their uniforms hanging from the little huts and such. They barricade the troops behind closed doors. And the troops tell me, "The women are knocking on our doors all night long, they're banging on the doors. We are men -- what are we supposed to do?" And in general, that is the prevalent attitude throughout the UN peacekeeping missions that I have traveled to.

In general, there has been a clampdown in response to the scandals. There used to be a Code of Conduct, which was not something that you signed, but it was standards that the UN held that peacekeepers were expected to uphold -- one of which was not to sexually exploit or abuse the local population. But now, it has so out of control that the SRSG issues bulletins that demand zero contact with the population, the "zero tolerance" policy. I just want to clarify: there is sexual *exploitation*, which often involves prostitution or unequal power relationships between consenting adults; and then there is sexual *abuse*, which usually involves rape, or some sort of extortionist sex for food or for money. I am using the term "sexual exploitation and abuse" (SEA) to talk about a whole range of things. The reason I am doing that is because it's gotten to the point where the UN has to address all of it. With "zero tolerance" at some point we're probably going to see two thirty-year-olds who are having a relationship, they are in love, they want to get married,

but he's going to get repatriated because there is zero tolerance. So it's tricky, hard, but it has to be observed, because the situation was just so bad before. So, the UN is struggling with this, they're trying to figure out how to handle this, they have a huge job in front of them.

Now I want to focus a bit on reasons why SEA is flourishing. I'm not sure how many of you are familiar with it, but in 2002, there was a big scandal in Sierra Leone, where the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners were implicated in a food-for-sex scandal. NGOs and humanitarian agencies have been through this kind of scandal before, and in response they have instituted Codes of Conduct, mandatory training, reporting systems, etc. But now we're seeing it come through to the UN -- and to me, in general, it seems worse in the UN than what I have seen in the NGO's. It's particularly galling and shocking because of their title: peacekeepers. These are the people who are supposed come in and save the day.

One of the factors to think about is that UN peacekeepers are almost overwhelmingly male. Of course, I don't mean to suggest that all men are rapists and sexual exploiters, and the bulk of the men that I have met on the UN peacekeeping missions are as appalled by this as everyone else. But just to give you some numbers -- as of July 2004, 25% of the civilians in UN peacekeeping missions were women; 4.4% of the police officers; and only 1% of the troops. This is important because you have is an overwhelmingly male environment, and an overwhelming environment of one sex tends to not take into account the other gender at all. What I believe has happened in the UN peacekeeping missions is that a hyper-masculine culture prevails there. Even the women who work there act in a traditionally male-gendered manner.

So, since the passage of Security Council Resolution 1325 there has been a strong call to integrating gender throughout all UN peacekeeping work, and a focus on the fact that we just need to get more women in there. Well, first, it's not going to happen anytime soon. The bulk of UN peacekeeping troops come from developing countries -- the top four troop contributors are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. I think that the only women Pakistan has in its army are nurses, and the other countries' militaries also have few women. Nepal has instigated a new program where they are recruiting women for the sole purpose of sending them to peacekeeping missions; however, this is going to take years, perhaps generations. The women in these societies are not that interested in joining the military and going overseas. And Western countries which might have more women in their militaries rarely send any troops to peacekeeping missions; instead they contribute funds. A Pakistani general once told me, "they pay and we bleed." So it's generally developing countries that send in their troops; the country makes money on this, and the troops are much better paid then when they are at home -- which is one of the reasons why they send men. It's a huge draw; particularly for some of the poorer countries because the UN pays them well and they get to take home the equipment that they're deployed with. There is a moneymaking motivation for a lot of the parties involved.



So, you have this hyper-masculine culture, and there is really no huge chance that there's going to be a lot of women peacekeepers deployed. The US is a good example: of the 77 police officers we sent to Liberia in 2004, they found zero women that they could deploy. In general, recruiting is done through the police union, and they attract retired policemen who need to put their kids through college, or just want to make a lump sum of money. And the pay is much better than at home -- they make about \$120,000 dollars for one year of service, and it's tax free, so then they can go home and retire. The UN does not have a standing police force, so these guys have to resign from their jobs and go do this job with no guarantee that their job will be available when they return. And it's even more difficult to recruit women, particularly women at the level they want, because by that level women have often had children.

I interviewed some female police officers in Haiti: a Nigerian woman and a Chilean woman. The Chilean woman was a single mom. Her mother and father were taking care of her daughter while she was gone for a year. One more impediment to women's participation is that the UN doesn't pay for a ticket to visit family at home. If you're going to make money, you're not going to spend three thousand dollars on a plane ticket to go home and visit your family. The Nigerian woman said that her husband lets her do this because he's also a policeman, and he knows how important it is. Plus, he didn't pass the test. But you can see why it is difficult to have more women in the civilian police service.

Among civilians in peacekeeping operations, the small percentage of women is made of support staff, the administrative staff. If you walk into a UN peacekeeping mission, you'll notice there are five or six women who are secretaries. At the other end of the spectrum, all of the SRSGs and Deputy SRSGs are men. At this point, there is only one female SRSG, and she's in Burundi. She's stepping down soon because the Burundi mission is closing. The Deputy SRSGs are not often women either. There is a dearth of women in any kind of management or other positions. So, while I do believe that you have to have gender balance and equality in all fields, I think that pinning your hopes on getting more women in the UN peacekeeping missions will not solve the SEA problem.

So I believe that it's this hyper masculine culture -- what do I mean by that? Well, it's not that it's within masculinity to exploit and abuse women. Instead, what has developed is the kind of thing that you tend to see in sports teams or police forces; it's a culture of silence, a wall of silence that surrounds it. You will hear stories—for example, when I was in Sierra Leone, someone said, “hey, the guy next door to me brings home five girls every night.” And if you say, “Why don't you say something about it?” the answer is “Well, why would I ruin his career? This is the Human Right Officer, he does great things, and he's setting up the tribunal. Why would I ruin his career, just over this? It's just prostitutes.” So there is a real reluctance to step out and speak up.

And there's a culture of impunity as well. You know, an abuser just gets transferred someplace else. The SRSGs have complained and rightly so; the only power they have if they find someone guilty of this is to repatriate them—to send them home. This is why UN is really struggling right now, because when you send them home, there is no follow

up. The UN is pushing for more follow up and agreements in the SOFAs, (the Status of Forces Agreements), and the Memorandums of Understanding. But for the civilians, it's very, very difficult. Russia's complaint is that they are *not like* the American legal system or French legal system. They don't trust UN investigators, and want their *own* investigators to investigate. There is the problem of forensic evidence -- gathering and keeping evidence in the chaos of a post-conflict setting. Many different types of evidence require you to gather witnesses who are reluctant to come forward. There are stories of men selling off their daughters or sisters -- not as slaves, but to have sex with -- if they can get a job as a driver. There is the reluctance of the local people, as this is their survival mechanism. The men won't rat out their buddies or ruin a good thing that they've got as well. So it's been treated at about the same level as a drunk driving offense, which can also get you repatriated from a UN peacekeeping mission.

Many blame the victim—they say, “But what you don't understand, these women are pros who know what they're doing and go after men.” And it's true that if you're a man walking down the street in a UN peacekeeping mission, the prostitutes will come after you, because you are a hot commodity. One of the best researchers I have read, Paul Higate, has a great line: “You'd be hard pressed to convince these men that it's not their handsomeness and charm that's got these women chasing them, but it's their pocketbook.” There is a lack of awareness *why* it's a problem and what's wrong with it.

The UN is approaching the problem from a variety of different ways. One of the big sources of triumph are the welfare centers that have been built for the peacekeepers. But when you hear the soldiers and peacekeepers talk about these welfare centers, it sounds like they're in prison. The welfare centers are gyms and TV centers to keep them occupied, nothing else -- as if the rape of young children only happens when you're bored. The UN trumpets this -- the quality of welfare and activities for the troops' morale is very important; high morale is essential for them to act effectively.

The other thing that they point to is increased training. What does that mean? When you land in Liberia, the first two weeks of your mission are spent getting trained: the rules of engagement; when to shoot at the enemy; where to pick up your paycheck; where to find grub; what gender means; why it's bad to have sex with prostitutes; how you leave here; and here's how you get on the train to go home. It comes through in a blur, on of a million things you are barraged with in that time. Another chronic problem with the training for any multinational force is the lack of a common language. In general, the troops don't speak the UN language; they speak their own tongue. Usually, only the officers can speak English, French, Spanish, or Portuguese -- depending on the mission. What happens then is that they train the officers in gender and sexual exploitation and abuse issues, and then expect the officers to train their troops. But you can bet that this is not high on their list of priorities.

So, how could prevention be strengthened? Within prevention, you have to look at supply and demand. The demand is the male peacekeepers. What can you do with that? You have to enforce it as a strict disciplinary issue. Prince Zeid of Jordan, a former peacekeeper himself, is one of the number one advocates at the UN about this. And he

has rightly pointed out that many peacekeepers make more money on one peacekeeping mission than they will ever see in their whole career in the Pakistani army or Jordanian army. So if instead of mere repatriation, you threaten to garnish their wages, they may take you seriously. That's the one thing everyone told me in Haiti: "Oh no, I would never do that, my family is counting on me to bring me this money home; if I lose that money, I've failed them, I will be shamed."

The other thing they talk about is improving training. Perhaps they need to deploy more UN trainers before sending in the peacekeepers? That won't work either. When I was in Sierra Leone and talked with them about this, they said, "Well, if the gender advisor in Sierra Leone would like to travel to the troop contributing countries offices and do the training herself, we would certainly support her to do that." She's going to travel to forty countries? And then do her regular job, which is already impossible, on top of that? What I have suggested is that instead of the UN being doing the pre-deployment training, we need to turn the responsibility over to the country itself. Anyone who has ever worked in training or in behavior change work realizes that you cannot take a completely foreign culture and drop it down in the middle of something, and expect people to understand it and accept it. (For example, the word *gender* means so many different things. There isn't even a word for gender in Arabic; it had to be introduced, made up.) But who better to do the training than local women's NGOs in that community? Every country I have ever been to has had a women's organization concerned about militarization, rape, and the connection between militaries and gender-based violence. I am now trying to identify and work with local organizations. I've met with a Bangladeshi women's group, who has spoken about the continual rapes of the hill tribe women by the Bangladeshi military. These are the people who can develop the curriculum that will resonate with their militaries.

First the militaries have to become serious about addressing this problem in their troops, but in general, they already are. Although one anecdote may help you appreciate the complexities of saying that. I went to talk to military attaché from a major troop-contributing country in the UN mission in New York. After talking for an hour, I really thought he got it, since he was handing me documents showing a man repatriated for his acts. However, no one knows what happened to this guy, because he was allowed to go home and visit his family before reporting back to prison, and the authorities haven't seen them since. As I left, I went to shake his hand, but he reached around me and tickled me right underneath my breasts. It's like a "The Far Side" cartoon -- I think he just heard sex, sex, sex. For an hour, I just talked to him about sex. There is still such a long way to go! This is the guy who has been chosen to be in New York and talk about this issue to concerned people.

I'd like to see more local organizations brought in to address this within their own militaries, and to be funded by outsiders. Donors are reluctant to fund local NGOs because they don't write good proposals, and don't have good accountability mechanisms. They are not quite sure whether to trust them, thinking that many are corrupt. This is a constant problem we see, and I just don't believe it's true. I'd like to see donors focus on that. For example, I spoke with a Filipina who told me that she was very

opposed to the Filipino troops, and to the Americans training the Filipino troops, in her home community. When the military came and deployed in her area, she went to talk to them with her women's group and asked how long they would be there, and why they were there. They said not to worry; it's only for three weeks for a small exercise. She said, "Well, I've got my eye on you. I am the military observer and we will be watching you." So every time a truck left the base, they drove behind it and wrote down who went where. They went to the bars, and then they came to the force commander everyday, and said, "Why are troops doing this, what's going on here?" until it just became so impossible that they said, "Okay, the exercises are over, we're leaving." So there's a capacity out there, there are NGOs out there that are willing to do this. That could deal with the pre-deployment training.

Another issue is money. They complain that they don't have enough funding to do this, bringing in extra training, talking about this issue more; it just costs too much and no one is interested in doing this.

As to the women themselves -- there are many different reasons women choose commercial sex work. But in general, in countries like Haiti, Liberia, and the Congo, there are no opportunities for women. When I interview women who have been raped, and when I go to gender-based violence programs, overwhelmingly, the women want income generation projects. They do not want counseling, or anything else but a way to make some money, support their families, and move on with their lives. And there needs to be more hard research on the impact of charging school fees or charging health fees in a post-conflict setting such as Liberia or the Congo. What is the impact of this on the most vulnerable people, who tend to be single females heading households? We know that 75% of displaced people tend to be women and children, so overwhelmingly this is the population you are dealing with in the areas where the peacekeepers are deployed.

So *empowerment of women* needs to be front and center in all post-conflict planning. Let me take a minute to clarify: I call myself a "gender focal point," and I strongly see the difference between the "empowerment of women" and "gender issues." If we are talking about "gender issues," for example, we might talk about gender-based violence, and in that case, the most vulnerable and overlooked people are men. There aren't any programs to help men deal with the fact that their wives, daughters, sisters, or mothers have been raped and that they were powerless to do anything about it. And you would be hard pressed to find any programs which deal with *men* who have been raped in developing countries -- and male-male rape *does* happen; that's one of the things we heard about in the Congo as well.

So when I say "empowerment of women," it is because I believe that there is gender-blind development planning in these post-conflict countries, and it is really impacting and hurting the women. The women are doing what they can, selling the commodity that makes the most money, which is their own bodies. So they, too, are reluctant to see any change; they often are not supportive of these new zero contact and zero tolerance policies, because the policies take away the only income these women have.

Now, in response, it is important to talk about the punishment of peacekeepers, and the problems with gathering information, and getting them into prison. Even if you waived their diplomatic immunity and tried them in the country where they committed the crime, many of these countries have very weak rule of law and judicial institutions. In Sierra Leone, for example, I followed a case where a woman was brave enough to step forward and try to prosecute her rapist. It got all the way through the courts, and he was put in prison, but two days later he bribed the judge and got out. He moved back to his home community, and this woman and her daughter were forced to move out. This was a man who had raped a 6 month old baby! So, if he cannot get put into prison, who can?

So, we discussed the punishment of peacekeepers, which has now become a big issue. What I hear is that the opposition right now comes from Russia, Egypt, and Mexico. Although the Egyptians and Mexicans do not send a lot of troops, they do fund peacekeeping. And the current US Government is extremely reluctant to allow an international body to investigate their own troops. We are currently blocking the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Darfur (supposedly because we think Sudan can be trusted to set up their own body!).

The other issue that Prince Zeid bravely put forward is financial support for the women after the peacekeepers move in. (I was not even willing to touch this issue in my report, since I did not see any solution.) In general, there are babies born due to the lack of birth control in these countries, and men's reluctance to use condoms. There is a whole disconnect between the UN HIV/AIDS policy towards its peacekeepers (where it hands out condoms), and the UN zero tolerance policy (where although you have the condoms, you are not supposed to use them). So we are finding that there are a lot of "peacekeepers babies" left behind, unsupported. Prince Zeid recommended that western countries should fund DNA testing, and the UN should force the peacekeepers to pay child support for the children they father. That is incredibly brave, and I do not know how that is going to work, but good for him for saying it!

One of the most depressing experiences I've had recently was when I went to Tubmanburg, a DDR cantonment site in Liberia, where the LURD rebel group (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy) was being demobilized. They had set up the camp for the females to come in. Large numbers of women came through and they were eligible to get \$300, just like the men. In general, there were no skills-generation or income-generation programs for any of the combatants. So some of the women ended up going back to act as prostitutes for the same Pakistani soldiers who had been putting them through the DDR process. Many of these girls were pregnant: in general, they had been sexually abused by the men that they served along side. They had children, STDs, they had dropped out of school, they had no education and we, the international community, were failing them. We were failing the most vulnerable groups, the very populations that we have been sent in to protect, and allowing the cycle of exploitation to be continued.

I would like to point out this kind of sexual exploitation and abuse is not only a military problem. In general, it is perpetrated by civilians as well, and it is a lot harder to track down the civilians in the UN system because you have hundreds of men and women in

civilian clothes who are out there a variety of reasons. When I was sitting at a table in the Mambo Point Hotel in Liberia, I saw sixteen men come in, mostly Russian and Eastern European, and I had no idea who they worked for. There was one Liberian woman with them. I turned to my colleague and asked, “Do you think she is a prostitute, or their girlfriend?” Who can tell just by looking at her? You have no idea. So how am I, as a stranger, to go up and say what’s the problem there? The civilian issue is going to be extremely vexing and very difficult to unravel.

### Questions and Discussion

**Q:** Following along the lines of civilian involvement, are there any programs for people who want to be involved with this issue?

**SM:** There is a need for effective public information campaigns. I am the proud possessor of six DPKO posters warning that using prostitutes is bad – the posters were funded by the US Department of State’s Human Trafficking Office. That is the extent of the public information for the peacekeepers. If you go into the community to talk to the Liberians or Haitians themselves, the public information officers are really behind the ball on this. For example, the public information officers usually have a radio program in every country they go to. Liberia has Radio UNMIL where they send out messages all day long about disarmament – ‘come to this site, get your money, go through disarmament;’ ‘peace is good for Liberia,’ ‘you need to go out and vote’ – constant education going on all day long. I asked the people at Radio UNMIL why they have not addressed SEA, and they answered that, “Nobody from the Gender Office has come in and written a program for us to put on air.” So they totally passed the buck there.

Since my report was done (it came out on October 18, 2005, and was based on research I did in 2004 and the beginning of 2005), they have instituted some new initiatives. After Mr. Klein stepped down in April 2005, Mr. Alan Doss came in as the new SRSG. And Doss wrote to me very angrily, saying that UNMIL “has instituted hundreds of reforms” that I did not talk about in my report. He said, “In September we put out a hotline for women to call.” Well, who has the money for a phone in Liberia? Most of the population is not privileged enough to have a phone. There is a phone number that you can call now that is manned, instituted two and a half years after the mission started. They are now slowly rolling out public information programs, but they have to constantly be pressured. There is still this concept that “this is a women’s issue, so let the NGOs handle it.” But there are small advances. There is a bulletin that is circulated to the international NGO protection working groups, where they are encouraged to report any abuses, but some NGOs have the attitude, “This a UN thing, you solve your own problems, we are busy trying to help people.”

**Q:** Given the proliferation of sexual transmitted diseases, and the disconnect from the UNAIDS program, is there any effort being made to provide programs for the victims or the prostitutes in terms of health issues?

**SM:** In post-conflict countries, no. That is a sad answer. Posted on our website there is a bulletin I wrote about HIV/AIDS in Liberia; another I would love to write is about PEPFAR, the Presidential Partnership for AIDS Relief, which is in countries that the US government has deemed high priority in the fight against AIDS. One of them is Cote d'Ivoire, which is right next door to Liberia. It is dissolving into civil conflict as we sit here, and there are no borders between Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia. I was up on the border trying to assess what was going on with the Ivorian refugees. You see trucks and truck drivers going back and forth, illegal trade going on -- just because there is conflict does not mean people are not moving around. There are traditional migration patterns going on. And you have HIV-positive peacekeepers. There is no standard HIV-testing for UN peacekeepers who are about to be deployed. This is true for a number of reasons. One, it is illegal in many countries to have mandatory testing for HIV/AIDS, plus it is discriminatory to not hire someone because they are HIV positive. What is particularly galling is that there are really no health services for peacekeepers or local people. In Liberia, some of the health clinics are run by NGOs and they told me that they were seeing full blown AIDS out there. I asked them how do they know, and they replied, "Well we're doctors!" I asked if they take them in to be tested, and they said, "To where? Send them on a truck for two days to Monrovia, where the only Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) facility is, only to be told that they are going to die? And then bring them back here, where there are no condoms or drugs to treat them?" We brought this to the attention of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, which tends to be a more progressive bureau (except under their new head). There is USAID, there is a push there, but AIDS is not seen as a priority in post-conflict countries because it happens so far down the road. In general, I think it is considered a development issue, rather than a conflict issue.

**Q:** Could you talk a little about this issue in relation to private military contractors (PMCs)?

**SM:** It is hard for me to know, since I have not been focusing on PMCs. We will see the biggest issues with contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan, not places such as Liberia. DynCorp has been contracted to rebuild the Liberian army and currently has received \$200 million to do that in Liberia. We would love to have \$50 million for the African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur. DynCorp is working there. I was on a trafficking panel recently with Sarah Mendelsohn and Martina Vandenburg; they are the ones teaching me about contracting and trafficking. In general, what they said was quite dire; it is hard even just to sensitize the investigators, the people whose job it is to look out for trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse, because they are simply blind to it. They do not see it. Martina told the story of a man in Bosnia who was drunk, and got into a car accident with two underage Ukrainian girls. He ran off, and left the injured girls behind in the car. The investigators never even interviewed the young women to find out why they were there, how they came to be there. And it turned out he owned them!

So what I found out from her, and from the reading I have been doing, that there is no progress. But if you are going to do advocacy, then you have to be hopeful and optimistic -- otherwise you need quit because you will get depressed and burned out. Once you put

the laws on the books and the words on the paper, you have a tool to hold people accountable. So that is the first step, to get that law in place. Then, we work on awareness, so that eventually we will see progress. People are, increasingly, getting sensitized to this issue.

**Q:** Please explain a little bit about the gender training UN peacekeepers get.

**SM:** It is available on their website. It is not great because it is a one-size-fits-all kind of thing. It is trying to point out the benefits of including women in planning -- the efficiency argument, as we call it. But I have not found any studies of its effectiveness or any evaluation of it. That is a big, *huge* problem. There is a lack of evaluation of any of the training programs they have done. Who is actually designing these programs? Generally, it is women designing them for men; NGO women design them for military men. There hasn't been a systematic study of what messages resonate with men, or what gets to them? Because as I said at the beginning, the bulk of them are not going to rape or exploit women. What messages do you have to put out there so they become aware of it?

**Q:** You mentioned that a great source of frustration is the lack of alternative ways for women to generate income. In your report, what kind of recommendations do you make about how to solve the problem?

**SM:** I know I started by saying that we are here to create the solutions. But, of course, it is difficult to have practical ones. At Refugees International, we always have the recommendation that is called the 'therefore all warring parties should cease fighting.' We always put that out there, it's a pie in the sky recommendation that you have no way of measuring or holding anyone accountable to. In general, I think this is the next step. This is not new. Since the 70s, we have been looking at putting women *into* development; we have had women *and* development, gender *in* development, gender mainstreaming -- there is a body of knowledge out there that knows the differences between gender-blind development planning and gendered development planning. In my report, I did not feel that I needed to go into that (particularly since the audience was people new to the issue and military peacekeepers). There needs to be a follow up with concrete recommendations for post-conflict settings such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, and with lessons learned on how to implement a gender-sensitive program. Part of my advocacy call is to meet with researchers and development organizations, and to challenge them to come up with solutions. Today, I met with John Snow Inc., a big public health contractor here in Boston, and I gave the same presentation to them. They were on it, they were interested, and they have ideas about solutions, too; so it is good for them to have the evidence as well.

**Q:** My question could be very controversial. We learn about how important it is to take into consideration the voice of the people who we are monitoring and evaluating. And to hear you say, and I appreciate you being honest about it, local women are often not really on-board with "zero tolerance" policy. So I am wondering if anyone has considered the legalization of prostitution. Although I know that Amsterdam is not the same situation as Pakistani troops in Liberia...



**SM:** And there are a lot of illegally trafficked women in Amsterdam....

**Q:** But the prostitutes who work legally there, they have protections, condoms, an income...?

**SM:** Yes, that idea has been floated. In fact, when I talked to the troop-contributing countries and UN people, many would say, "I do not have your Western hang-up with prostitution. This is a moral problem that you in the US have." It is always seen as a US issue. The Europeans say that to us: "You US prudes, what do you have against sex?" As I have stated from the beginning, there are a million different nuances between exploitation and abuse. What I am really concerned about is ending the abuse. But because a culture of tolerance has evolved around exploitation, the abuses flourish like crazy. The UN has had to swing down hard to come to a legal middle ground. Many countries are for legalization of prostitution, but while the "prudish US" is saving prostitutes from themselves with their prostitution laws, and the Europeans say that legalization of prostitution is good, none of the developing countries are in general pro-prostitution. Women who work as commercial sex-workers are usually stigmatized, and much more vulnerable in multiple ways. While prostitution might be a source of income, I would like to see what would happen to the rates of prostitution if women-centered development actually did happen, and there were viable, effective means of income generation.

**Q:** Would you say more about the DDR program in Liberia?

**SM:** One of the things that would have helped in Liberia would be if they had actually implemented the very good program that they designed, which never fully happened. Due to money shortages and pressure, Klein felt that he really needed to push hard and get the DDR started right away, to get the peace process started and to reassure the population that the UN really meant business. They started out their first DDR in December of 2003, which was disastrous. It failed miserably, and what they did to calm down all the rioting and the thousands of combatants who arrived to receive money, was to start passing out cash to everyone, saying, "Here is your first installment -- here is your first installment; come to the cantonment site when the DDR starts for real, and then we will do the *real* DDR." The real DDR was first conceived as a three-week program. I read the plans and they looked really great on paper. The combatants would come in, and spend three weeks getting intensive training in the skills of their choice. They would receive health care screening and education. They would be taught conflict resolution skills, and they would really work on the process of demobilization – breaking the commanders' chains of control over the ranks.

There was a big push to incorporate women, too, mostly, I believe, due to Dyan Mazurana's paper on Sierra Leone. So there was a big push to get women in there, and also a big push to get the child combatants into DDR, because Liberia has a big problem with child combatants. So they really tried to loosen the requirements of how someone could qualify for the program. There is a nebulous art/science of how you determine who

is a combatant; there is no training program that can teach you how to tell who carried a gun in his hands, who was a porter, and who was a sex slave. So they opened it up to anyone who presented him or herself as a combatant. But because of the failed first DDR attempt, they ran out of money. So they shrunk the DDR process from three weeks to three days. But in three days you cannot demobilize these soldiers. They showed *Rambo* films to entertain them at night, which is not really a nonviolent conflict-resolution oriented thing to do, but it entertained them.

As for the women's programs -- to give you a sense of how low a priority they are -- when I went in two days before the DDR started in February, they had not even finished the women's barracks yet. The women's barracks were down at the bottom of a hill, and the rainy season had started, so that the latrines were going to be flooded out right away. So the women were not going to go into those camps! Additionally, in general it is very difficult to get the commanders to let go of the women and let them go to DDR. Further, there was no gender-sensitized message to recruit the women to come out of the bush. And the women themselves know that if they go and identify themselves as combatants, they are going to be stigmatized -- they can't return to their home communities. I interviewed a group of 15 women who told me that they just want to set up a little market place stall, here in Monrovia, and just live here. They do not feel they can go back to their home communities. There is no seed-grant money there, no micro-credit loans, there is nothing available for them.

So as I said, The DDR program barely had enough money to pay out the cash it had promised as it went in to demobilize combatants. They just kept rushing the DDR as it moved out of Monrovia, up into Lofa and Nimba counties. They rushed it faster and faster, and refused to incorporate NGOs. The NGOs themselves were primarily humanitarian agencies, and really reluctant to get involved, since it compromised their concept of humanitarian space. An earlier report I wrote, *Peacekeeping in West Africa: A Regional Approach*, explains it a little more. The UN really antagonized the humanitarian NGO community, and the NGOs said, "We want to do it on our own terms." So, the UN mission found the NGOs who were willing to implement the DDR program fast and easy, and did not insist on any of these rights protections. So you had the women (the ones who chose to go) go through quickly, with no support for them when they returned home. We always complained about this DDR program -- there is no "R" -- no Reintegration.

Now, if you go into Liberia, into the communities, there is a hierarchy. At the top there are the combatants who received \$300. Then there are the refugees, who because they crossed the international lines are protected, and have a lead agency (the UNHCR) which organizes return for them, and sends them back with about \$50 and a big, three month supply of food and things to set up their lives. Then there are the internally displaced people who receive \$5 and a month's worth of food. They had been promised trucking back to their communities, but someone stole all the money out of the program. Then, IOM [*International Organization for Migration*] was hired to do it, but they were not able to do the job. And then there are the people who actually stayed in the community, hid in the bush, or somehow weathered through, and they got nothing.

So you see the problem. We talk about a “community-based reintegration approach,” where investment is placed in the community, where everyone is treated the same. But in reality, you have to tread this line: how do you convince combatants to demobilize, and put down their guns when they have been “feeding themselves by their guns,” as they say in Liberia? They have to have an incentive, a reward. But at the same time, if you then end up privileging them over their victims, you create problems in the community.

**Q:** I have a question about gender training for peacekeepers. I was in Cyprus all last summer working for the United Nations, and had interesting encounters with UN peacekeepers while stationed in the buffer zone. I had to walk 45 minutes everyday from the UNDP office to the UN checkpoint, and I noticed that only female peacekeepers stopped and offered me a ride. I asked them why the male peacekeepers don’t ever stop when they see me walking by the side of the road. The women thought it was because they all had received “gender training” in which they were given strict rules and regulations about interactions with persons of opposite sex during their tour of duty.

**SM:** They are afraid....

**Q:** When I talked to the males, they could not quite tell me what gender training was about or what gender sensitivity meant. I think the training registered in a wrong way. I was wondering if you would support this type of training being delivered by a former military officer, so that the soldiers might be more receptive to the content of the training.

**SM:** I think that is a great idea. Paul Higate, in his report on Sierra Leone and the Congo, pointed out that the best person to talk about this is a convert – a male peacekeeper who “gets it.” Earlier, I said that men tend to be the ignored group when you are looking at reproductive health programs. They are ignored in gender programs. All of our Gender Advisors are women. Why is that? Why don’t we have male Gender Advisors who can talk the language that men can understand? People see the word “gender” and take it to mean “women.” People hear the word “feminist” and take it to mean “women who hate men.” So as long as we use this terminology which does not resonate with the people we are trying to reach, I agree completely.

I wonder if you saw this poster when you were in Cypress? Sarah Mendelsohn and Martina Vandenburg showed me a poster from the mission in Cyprus about the “sex slave party” that took place there this summer. It was a poster that was out in the barrack areas with a woman in bondage, stepping with a stiletto heeled shoes onto another women, and it said “hot sexual slave party for all UN peacekeepers this week, bring your sex slave.”

**Q:** What was the response to Prince Zeid’s report, and what is the follow up on it?

**SM:** Prince Zeid is the Jordanian ambassador who was tasked by Kofi Annan to write a comprehensive report on sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peacekeeping missions. He is a former UN peacekeeper himself. The Jordanian peacekeepers in the Congo were renowned for being particularly bad, so they picked him specifically because he would understand the problem. He issued his report in March, and he also came and spoke at the

launch of my report; his comments were in the *New York Times* story that covered the launch.

The response to his report has been mixed. The bigwigs in DPKO are behind him and support him, but he is getting incredible pushback from the troop-contributing countries and member states. This connects to something that my colleague, Peter Gantz, constantly says when we argue over the UN. When I'd say that the UN needs reform, he'd reply that the UN is only as strong as its member states. This is completely true. Reform may be popular for the Republican administration and the bureaucrats who run the UN, but if the member states, including the US (which pays supposedly 27%, but only 25%, of its dues, and is threatening to cut those off even further), do not get behind it and push through some of these reforms, it is not going to happen. They are just stymieing until the media glare dies down, and then everyone will forget it. So Zeid is quite disappointed. He told us this story of being in the Congo with Kofi Annan, talking about sexual exploitation and abuse in Bunia, and having this big press conference about it. And the same time they are talking about it, two peacekeepers were found guilty of having molested small children. It took place at the same time, and he said to himself, 'My God, if *this* level of attention cannot convince them not to do it, what will it take?'

**Q:** I have two questions: Are they going to drive the zero-tolerance policy further underground? And, is anyone looking at *why* peacekeepers are molesting small children?

**SM:** There is very little field of research on sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peacekeeping missions. There are not many people who are looking at this and thinking about these issues. There have been no systems in place to collect the data, and a lot of evidence that we have is anecdotal. As anyone who has lived in small, hot-house environment like a sorority house, or summer camp knows, in a closed environment with very small numbers of people, the rumors fly. Rumors fly, things get bent out of shape, things get told more and more horrific. Has anyone read the book *Emergency Sex and Other Desperate Measures*? It is an interesting book, the story of three aid workers, in their own words, and one of them works for DPKO. They write about what the culture is like out there, and if you read that you will understand better that it's a common response when you are in danger, when you fear for your life, that you will have sex with someone just to reaffirm your life. That is the culture, and within it you hear these stories. What I heard: "the Bangladeshis like little boys," "the Pakistanis prefer little girls," and "the Nigerians just want to have sex with any woman that walks in front of them."

When I was in Sri Lanka looking at the response to the tsunami, it appeared to me there was an epidemic of incest going on. But is it an epidemic of incest? Or is it that when you hear about a small child being raped it so egregious and so shocking that you feel bound to break the stigma and the taboos that silence people and start talking about it? I do not know the answer to your question. I hope there is not an epidemic of child molesters. There were claims that a ring of pedophiles had infiltrated MONUC, the UN Mission in the Congo, and that they were recruiting their friends. The more you read about incest, pedophilia, and trafficking of women, you will start to believe that it is an epidemic of

mental illness. I am not going to say that peacekeepers in general tend to rape little children, but certainly I read reports about instances of child-rape.

**Q:** Did you make efforts to try to separate the discussion of SEA generally from the issue of child-rape? Discussion of SEA of women seems to get lost when child-rape is mentioned.

**SM:** No, there are no efforts to separate the discussion. When I was introduced on FOX News (an important platform, since it is what the Republican lawmakers watch), their headlines said, “UN Peacekeepers Raping Babies – Yet another UN Scandal.” The media in general likes the salacious aspects. I have been contacted by ten documentary makers who want to make a documentary about SEA, and they ask, “Can you tell me the name of women who will go on record on the camera and tell me that they were sexually exploited by UN peacekeepers?”

**Q:** In *Emergency Sex and Other Desperate Measures* there is a female aid worker in Somalia who has an extended sex orgy with a male prostitute. In the context of this conversation, it’s interesting that it is actually a woman doing the sexual exploitation, and it is not a military person, it is an aid worker.

**SM:** Actually, she is a civilian who works for DPKO.

**Q:** I understand and agree with your argument about this hyper-masculinity complex. But I also wonder if there is something about being out of your environment, and feeling all the rules are suspended, and things that you would never ever consider doing in your own country somehow seem okay in this foreign environment? All of your ideas of morality, and what is right or wrong, are completely skewed.

**SM:** I think that is also an interesting frame to look at. (Paul Higate has looked at it in the best-titled article I have ever read -- “Join the army, go to foreign countries, meet interesting people, and have sex with them” – about the similarities between sex tourism and military recruiting!) Who were some of the abusers at Abu Ghraib in Iraq? They were women. There is no rule that says women are inherently more benevolent, kinder, or less likely to abuse power. In general, women tend not to have power, so they cannot abuse it. So it is a hyper-masculine culture that is there, but “masculine,” in the way that masculinities tend to play out in our society.

I do think you are completely right about the “away from home” syndrome, and I’m glad you brought it up. We need to learn more about what drives people to do sex tourism, what drives people to go on the sex-package tour to Thailand and have sex with little children, and then come home and be a family person? In Sri Lanka, they are having an upsurge of women sex tourists -- mostly Korean women. In the Gambia and Jamaica, it is a huge problem. A lot of American women go to Mexico. In Jamaica they were calling it, “*Rent a Rasta*.” Check out Paul Higate’s article. We have not found a lot of academic journal articles on some of these things, but some of the interesting work out there is in the HIV/AIDS behavior change literature.

**Q:** Do you know if there has been much change in the situation in Liberia now that Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has become President?

**SM:** First, I want to clarify that I have not been in Liberia since January 2005. (I am going back in December.) So I do not know from first-hand experience what the changes are on the ground, but what I hear is that not much has changed. Before they turned it over to Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the transitional government looted all the government offices. All the money that UN has been putting in for the past two years is gone -- even their capacity to buy desks, lamps and such. They are going to have to start over from scratch. There was just incredible corruption in the transitional government. I would love to hear the WIPNET representative you have coming here to talk in March, because they are really the reason that women were included in DDR, and that women's turnout was so big in the elections. From what I hear, there is a lot of hope and anticipation in Liberia now, but Liberians have seen a lot of bad things in their lives: as one woman told me, "I have done a lot of nasty things to survive to where I am right now." I think they are waiting to see, but I do not think there is euphoria on the streets.

### **Biography**

**Sarah Martin** has been a Gender Advocate at Refugees International since 2003, focusing on issues of gender-based violence in post-conflict settings. Her recent publication, *Must Boys be Boys? Ending Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peacekeeping Missions*, is based on fieldwork in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. She has also written about: HIV/AIDS and reproductive health in West Africa and Sudan; female combatants in the DRC, Rwanda and Sri Lanka; and the effect of land reform on female farm workers in Zimbabwe. She previously worked at JSI Research and Training Institute with the Reproductive Health for Refugees and the Empowerment of Women Research Program.