
Final Report Field work in Haiti
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In the crossroads: Haiti, MINUSTAH and the international community

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Abstract

This report intends to evaluate international efforts in the prevention, treatment and eradication of sexual gender based violence (SGBV) in conflict and post conflict situations. For that purpose, it shows the development of a legal framework within the UN system with the launch of resolutions and guidelines that intend to improve women`s conditions in the field. Despite the significant advance of this matter, the field work highlights the difficulties and challenges of translating this framework of reference into practice. While member states lack appropriate training and female personnel; the UN struggles with budgetary constraints, inter-agency competition and lack of cooperation between main actors on the field, including civil society organizations apart from the UN system.

Patterns of sexual and gender violence seem to have been a common trend since before UN involvement. The strategy adopted to prevent and respond to SGBV has focused on several fronts, from improving their physical security to enhancing their economic and social status through empowerment policies. However, while this strategy has been limited, it lacks the involvement of all actors on the field. The mandate to protect civilians needs further clarification to better involve military and police actors. At the same time, UN civilians and civil society organizations ought to find mechanisms of coordination to avoid parallel and uncoordinated activities that do not serve their own purpose and beset an integrating approach.

As Latin America`s contribution to peace operations has grown exponentially in the past few years, this report focuses on (but is not limited to) the efforts carried on by countries from that region as an attempt to assess how their contribution has been translated into the adaptation and incorporation of UN guidelines. As they reaffirm their political and social compromise with Haiti, a “Latin American way of doing peacekeeping” has evolved. However, analyses showed that some has incorporated more gender mainstreaming actions than others highlighting important differences in the regional approach.

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Acronyms:

ARGBATT	Argentine Battalion
BOYCOY	Bolivian Company
BRABATT I	Brazilian Battalion I
BRABATT II	Brazilian Battalion II
CHIBATT.....	Chilean Battalion
CVR	Community Violence Reduction
DDR.....	Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration
DPKO.....	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HC.....	Humanitarian Coordinator
HNP.....	Haitian National Police
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MSF.....	Médecins Sans Frontières- Doctors without Borders
QIP	Quick Impact Projects
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SC.....	Security Coordinator
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SOP.....	Standard Operating Procedures
SGBV.....	Sexual Gender Based Violence
SOFA	Solidarité Famn Ayisyen (Haitian local organization)
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
URUBATT I	Uruguayan Battalion I
URUBATT II	Uruguayan Battalion II
URUMAR.....	Uruguayan Navy

INTRODUCTION

Although the UN's leadership in enhancing women's status and empowerment has been an important part of the Organization's mainstreaming actions on the field of peace and security, there is a gap between theory and practice. UN resolutions, guidelines and statements have approached the problem according to its magnitude and have promoted holistic approaches to improve women's vulnerable status and to end sexual violence in conflict and post conflict situations. However, the difficulties of translating what is still on paper into practice have posed a bigger challenge than framing the issue and advancing its agenda.

As the UN's efforts in peace building and post-conflict reconstruction increases, concerns regarding the vulnerability of women and children to violence, particularly sexual violence, are amongst one of its primary concerns. Since the year 2000, the UN has approved a series of resolutions that aim to promote gender balance abroad and at home, enhancing women's political, economic and social status in intervening and intervened societies.

The strategy is based on the assumption that not only must the security environment be improved, but also women's status. In these con-

flict and post conflict situations, the subjection of women to violence is intrinsically related to their social status and subject position within the societal structure. Consequently, addressing the "inequality" problem by promoting gender balanced local institutions and empowering women is an efficient way to protect them against all forms of violence.

However, despite the validity of this action, the UN has faced increasing difficulties in implementing its strategy. Overlapping UN agencies and uncoordinated work are just some of the challenges. To add more to the problem, countries that contribute the most to peace operations seem to not care about UN's gender concerns. Poor training capacity and the absence of gender approaches are some common problems shared by the police and military units sent to peace operations.

The UN has made its guidelines and training requirements available, however, it lacks the capability of translating them into practice and enforcing States' compliance. As a consequence, many unprepared peacekeepers are still deployed in peace operations, and in some cases, they become part of the problem and take part in these hideous acts.

In the light of this debate, this report will ana-

lyze UN gender based actions and policies in one of its peace operations: the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Haiti is an interesting case study. It has been plagued by sexual and other forms of gender based violence against women and has been the object of different UN peacekeeping missions since the 90's. Moreover, it reflects a paradoxical reality: it is not a conflict or post conflict situation. Although gang rivalry led to the multiplication of several political upheavals and the worsening of the security and humanitarian situation leading to Haitians fighting Haitians on the streets, it was insufficient to be called or considered a civil war by the international community or Haitians themselves.

MINUSTAH has been present in the country since 2004 and despite the accomplishment of important goals, such as supporting the establishment of a democratic government and the improvement of the security situation; Haiti confronts a complex humanitarian crisis exacerbated by the constant recurrence of natural disasters and foreign aid dependency. As Haitians demand the UN to leave, their weak government structure shakes dangerously in light of the new political disturbances and lack of resources to address the population's basic needs.

Considering this context this report will analyze how the different actors within MINUSTAH deal with the widespread problem of SGBV in Haiti and evaluate how successful UN efforts in the area have been to date. For this purpose I will first analyze the UN's basic strategy in addressing SGBV in peace missions zones, identifying its strategy as a foundational basis that determines patterns of evaluation to be tested against MINUSTAH's actions. Secondly, Haiti's political, security and social contexts will be evaluated, highlighting the nature of gender based violence in the country. The third part will focus on the central question of the report, that is, how MINUSTAH's actions seek to fulfill the UN's conceptual and theoretical approaches to the problem of SGBV.

This key part was accomplished thanks to a field research performed by the Latin American Defense and Security Network (RESDAL) from May 30th to June 30th, 2011. The field research allowed a first-hand analysis of the practices and perceptions of several different actors on the field. It is also important to clarify that although not limited to a Latin American lens, the research had a focus on Latin American countries and thus most interviewees, particularly the military troops, were from that region.

THE UNITED NATIONS IN FRONT OF SEXUAL GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

As part of the UN's efforts to promote and maintain peace, gender approaches are gradually being included in all of the UN's actions related to peacekeeping. The logic is plain and simple: incorporating women in peace talks and post-reconstruction efforts is an important step towards a more equitable society, reinforcing women's reintegration and contributing to the underpinnings of the peace process.

This debate is reinforced with the transformation of the international security order and the changing patterns of conflicts and nature of threats. Interstate conflicts are not as frequent as they used to be. However, internal strife, often resultant from cultural or ethnic differences and/or state failure, is a prominent feature of the emerging "international security order". In this context, while the individual's security is put in jeopardy, it is progressively seen as inextricably linked to the state's security.

As a consequence, since the 90's the UN has established several peace missions, aiming to reconstitute the statehood of these places and, at the same time, to protect the civilians threatened by numerous internal upheavals within these societies. In such situations, whereby the lives of the civilian population are seriously threatened, women and children are particularly vulnerable to different types of vio-

lence and, in particular, to sexual violence.

According to Pratt and Leah¹, sexual violence takes a variety of forms including "individual rapes, sexual abuse, gang rapes, genital mutilation, and rape-shooting or rape-stabbing combinations, at times undertaken after family members have been tied up and forced to watch." They also add that sterilization, sexual slavery and forced prostitution are also common forms of wartime sexual violence.

The dynamics of war, the symbolic meaning of the subjection of women and lack of security in conflict and post conflict situations along with women's role as the providers for the elderly and children, transform them into easy targets of violence. It is not just a matter of opportunity. Although motivations vary, throughout history widespread cases of SGBV had one element in common: the subjection of women to violence committed by man was and is part of an unequal gender status previous to the conflict.²

Considering women and young girls' vulnerability to sexual violence in conflict and post conflict situations and the relation between their

1 Pratt, Marion and Werchick, Leah. *Sexual Terrorism: Rape as a Weapon of War in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: An assessment of programmatic responses to sexual violence in North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema, and Orientale Provinces*. USAID, 2004.

2 UN OCHA Research Meeting, "Use of Sexual Violence in armed conflicts: Identifying gaps in Research to inform more effective interventions", June 26th, 2008.

full rehabilitation and reintegration and the establishment of an equitable society and reinforced peace, the UN has adopted gender mainstreaming policies in all peacekeeping actions. Its core objective is to address the vulnerable status of women in these societies by protecting and empowering them, thus establishing the foundational basis of equitable societies.

In 2000, RES 1325 set the UN agenda regarding women, peace and security. It put the incorporation of women in police and military units as an important operational capacity to be considered by member states and urged them to deploy more female personnel to peace operations at all decision-making levels and in all components (civilian, police and military).

Eight years later, in 2008, RES1820 was the first that clarified the relation between sexual gender based violence and the difficulties in establishing lasting peace in post-conflict zones. It reaffirmed the necessity to ensure the protection of women and young girls from sexual violence and to rehabilitate and reintegrate victims to society.

In 2009, two Security Council Resolutions focused on the problem: RES1888 and 1889, reaffirming the importance of increasing women's participation in peace operations and stating that sexual violence was not only amongst the most serious crimes against humanity, but also a serious threat to the peace process. Member states were encouraged to increase the participation of women in all peace process stages, to promote awareness and gender sensitive trainings and to cooperate in the establishment of sound local institutions.

Finally, in 2010, RES1960 aimed to ensure the protection of women against generalized and systematic sexual violence in armed conflicts and to promote access to medical and psychosocial treatment as well as legal assistance and economic reinsertion of SGBV victims.

Overall, these resolutions work in conjunction to form the UN's strategy to address sexual and gender based violence, and highlight its

foundational pillars:

1. *Promoting the empowerment of women in the economic, social and political life through gender balanced actions during reconstruction process.*

As SGBV is inextricably linked to gender based inequality, promoting affirmative action to increase women's participation in peace talks and in the political and economic life of the state will positively affect their social status and condition.

2. *Promoting gender balance in UN's deployed personnel in all its components (civilian, police and military).*

Enhancing gender balance within the UN personnel on the field has two direct effects: 1. First, it provides a model to the society under construction, highlighting the presence of women in all instances. 2. Second, by promoting increased participation of women among the police and military personnel, women and young girl's security is enhanced. It encourages reporting as women may be more comfortable to report sexual violence cases to other women. Furthermore, in light of past experiences, sometimes the UN and other intervening forces are part of the problem; increasing women in combat functions would partially address this problem as well.

3. *Enhancing the UN's capacity to respond to sexual violence in the field.*

On one front, the UN has attempted to promote gender sensitive training and awareness, improving soldiers, police officers and civilians' capacity to respond to SGBV on the field. On another front, it has promoted the creation of gender unit offices responsible to improve overall field mission actions in regard to gender.

4. *Promoting the establishment of effective local institutions to address sexual violence.*

As part of reconstruction efforts, the UN has promoted the establishment of sound police institutions and justice systems to address sexual violence on the field. An important part of the rehabilitation and reintegration efforts of women victims of SGBV relates to promoting a safe environment and to breaking the cycle of impunity.

HAITI AND ITS CONTEXT: GOVERNMENT, CULTURE AND GENDER ISSUES

The path from the Pearl of the Caribbean to a broken nation is a complicated one. Haitians often appeal to superstition when trying to cope with the country's enormous problems. During the night, the sounds of the voodoo practices could be heard in different locations and stories about how Haiti became a broken nation fill the imaginary of the local population. Whether ancient Haitians or voodoo practitioners are responsible for bringing disgrace to the country through an evil pact with the devil is unknown; however, many believe that an equally powerful and mystical action is necessary to rescue the country from its current humanitarian situation.

The Fantasy Island - as some foreigners would call Haiti, where everything is possible and no rules exist - is a complex and paradoxical place. It is home to 10 million inhabitants, the poorest of the Americas and where more NGOs per square meter are settled and fight over the scarce international resources in an economic crisis setting. However, not even the concentrated aid has managed to save Haiti from its current dire state. The socio-economic devastation, gang-related criminality, weak government, an under-prepared national police and a disillusioned population are just some of the countless challenges ahead.

Hundreds of millions of dollars in an uncertain intervention and other hundreds in aid have produced poor returns. Although the democratic government has been reestablished along with other state institutions since 2006, there is a gap between the state's capacity and its desire to be free from the international presence in its territory. *"Without MINUSTAH, Haiti will return to the pre-MINUSTAH state of nature"*, was a common response in all interviews with international actors performed during the field trip.

If this be true or not events unfolding in the near future will tell. Not only has the Haitian government openly expressed that it is time for MINUSTAH to leave, but also MINUSTAH's main troop contributor, Brazil, has given the first signs that it may be returning home soon. In fact, it was verified that most security threats have been overcome and what is still to be done refers to police work. Still, the military engineer companies would be of good use and there are rumors that more of those will be soon arriving in Haiti, while artillery troops will be sent back to their countries.

With all this help it seems incomprehensible for the inattentive observer that Haiti still is in such a fragile situation. Haiti's vulnerability not only comes from its effervescent political up-

heavals and gang activity, it is also a result of its geographic position, on the route of deadly hurricanes, and subject to disastrous earthquakes that seem to push the nation back every time it seems to be ready to walk on its own feet.

However, as much as natural disasters contribute to the nation's increasing humanitarian needs and devastated infrastructure, it is also a direct result of social and economic problems that hinder reconstruction efforts and the institutionalization process. The 2010 earthquake in Chile is an example of how a country experiencing a similar or even worse natural disaster can provide a more adequate, faster and permanent response. *"Haiti's 2010 earthquake? It looks like it happened yesterday"*, commented some Chilean military officers when comparing Haiti's post-earthquake situation to Chile's reconstruction efforts after the earthquake that hit the country a few months after Haiti's 2010 earthquake.

But those were not the only answers we gathered during the time we spent in Haiti. *"Haiti's problem is a cultural one, only a generational change can save Haiti, not MINUSTAH."* That was the most common response received when interviewees were asked about Haiti. As troubled as it might look, culture was considered as the main factor explaining Haiti's current vulnerable condition. International actors, from different backgrounds, military, police and NGO workers would say that there is a cultural factor that makes Haiti what it is. Whether such statements were carried with prejudice or not, they had common grounds: in general, the Haitian population was perceived to be extremely individualist, and with no sense of community.

Interviewees would go even so far as to say *"They are only worried about their own and immediate well-being. They don't worry about long-term stability or even their own neighbor. It might sound harsh, but I don't think Haiti is ready for democracy"*, confessed an interviewed officer serving MINUSTAH for more than a year. Depicted by most interviewees as extremely individualist,

Haitians are seen as the main contributing factor causing the country's situation.

"They don't seem to care about their situation. They are living in tents for more than a year and don't leave because in the camps they receive food and water for free and thus they don't have to work", adds a military official. This very same statement was heard a couple of times and repeated by many other interviewees, highlighting the inability of many actors on the field to comprehend the local culture and to assess their necessities. *"It is not consensual. There are those who love MINUSTAH and are grateful for the help, and those that throw stones at us and demand us to leave"* clarifies a young Latin American soldier who didn't seem to understand why Haitians would want them out of their territory when the state could not work properly on its own. *"The population's perception of us? I think it varies, and it is related to age- children and elderly are very caring and enthusiastic about us. The children in particular, they are not afraid, they come after us, running behind the vehicles and greeting with a smile. But the adults don't like us. They see us as invaders and often yell 'Allez MINUSTAH'"*, mentions a member of the military deployed close to the border with Dominican Republic.

It was indeed a consensus amongst all interviewed actors that education was the way out for Haiti, the only way by which the cycle would be broken and the enthusiastic children could become enthusiastic adults that would care for the country they live in. As critics have emphasized, an initial assessment would confirm the international community's worst fears. *"MINUSTAH give me water"*, *"MINUSTAH give me food"*, are common signs on the streets of Haiti's main urban centers, indicating that Haitian population may have indeed developed a dependent relation to charity and international aid.

However, if aid had never been provided, would Haiti's situation ever be improved? That is hard to know. More importantly it is certain that the realist approach that excludes moral-

ity from any political considerations cannot be applied to Haiti, as the international community seems unable to cohabit a world in which people are dying of starvation and nobody does anything.

Haiti and SGBV

Culture was also the champion explanation accounting for gender based violence in Haiti. According to most interviewees, women's status in Haiti society is a submissive one. As they are responsible for the support of the family, they end up being victims of economic exploitation by their own partner and targeted in unsafe environments, such as that of the post-earthquake scenario.

In fact, it was a consensus amongst all different international and local actors that the earthquake and the resultant unsafe environment, particularly within the IDP camps, only brought the problem of widespread SGBV to the surface. Despite the fact that all of MINUSTAH's components - including the military, police and civilian contingents- agreed on the need to reinforce security within the camps as their precarious conditions may have facilitated misconducts; it was also said that violence against women has always been present in Haiti.

The civilians were the most reticent in categorizing SGBV as a security problem; however, they did recognize that the recurrence of sexual and other forms of violence against women have frequently happened within IDP camps. MINUSTAH's Gender Unit confirms that the current security condition has facilitated the recurrence of SGBV in Haiti, particularly in the camps and for that reason security counter-actions had been taken. Amongst those, the military was authorized to enter the camps along with the police. Previously, their presence was limited to the perimeter of the camps.

They also agree that it is not only a security problem. To this end, UN-Women and many

other civil society organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and SOFA (a Haitian NGO dedicated to report and eradicate SGBV cases in Haiti) have become active in the field of prevention and response to sexual and gender based violence. According to these actors, it is a mistake to blame IDP camps for the problem of widespread sexual violations and other types of GBV in the country. *"It perpetuates a wrong view of the problem, GBV has always been present in Haiti; the IDP camps violations has only brought the topic to the surface and the international community could no longer ignore it"*, said one high ranking officer of UN-Women, in an interview with RESDAL's research team. This is one of the main points of debate regarding GBV and there is a clear line between those believe the IDPs have facilitated an increase in sexual violence cases and those that firmly believe it hasn't changed the pattern of an ever-existing reality, but only making it more evident.

Amongst the latter group, many would say that there is an intrinsic and cultural problem within Haitian society. The central role of women is that of a submissive position and vulnerable status. Many of the interviewees would say consider women responsible for the support of the family and for the care of the vulnerable, particularly of children and elderly. However, their status is inferior to that of the man, transforming GBV into a social problem.

Gender based violence in Haiti is thus different from that of a conflict or post conflict situation. First of all, despite all the similar destructive signs, Haiti is not considered by the Haitians or by the international community as a conflict or post-conflict zone. Secondly, the kind of massive rapes and violations aimed at undermining opponent or ethnically different groups are not observed in Haiti, where the problem seems to be more related to a generational mindset and the current insecure social, economic and political situation.

While women are constantly victims of several types of GBV, particularly domestic vio-

lence, they confront yet another vast array of challenges in pursuing treatment and justice. As explained by *Concertation Nationale*, a national platform comprising local organizations, government ministries and international UN agencies to fight SGBV, there are only a few health centers that treat SGBV victims and even fewer provide them with official proof of crime. Not only are there limited centers, but financial costs, such as for transportation and fees, may add to the challenge of seeking assistance.

The Haitian Police lack the capacity to address these crimes. Not only are there no forensic specialists, but few members of the police force have received training on gender. The justice system also poses the following barrier to recourse. At a nascent stage, it rarely condemns criminals, who may also become victims of the system, being thrown in prisons without judgment or defense lawyers.

This debate comes along with another: the reporting system. The “problem of data” was a common issue highlighted by all interviewees. While some would say the earthquake destroyed the database, others would emphasize that the different ways of reporting did not, up to now, allow the establishment of a joint database. As a consequence, patterns of SGBV occurrences cannot be determined.

Nonetheless, there seems to be an even more worrisome reason explains why the reporting system is problematic. It seems that there is not an agreed-upon definition of SGBV, with different actors interpreting the term different ways.

“What is reported as SGBV? Just because the victim is a woman it doesn’t mean it was gender based violence. You cannot say that a female victim of an assault is a victim of gender based violence”, explained a Latin American Police officer. Other representatives, be they from important international NGOs or from organizations within the UN system, argued that misinterpretations should be avoided: *“How do you know if the data indicates that SGBV has increased or if there was*

increase in reporting violations? The only conclusion one can make is that awareness campaigns may be working better and women are less shy to report cases. It doesn’t necessarily mean there was an increase in sexual violations, it can mean there was an increase in reporting the crimes.”

And that is true. The situation in Haiti is not favorable for reliable quantitative data. Not only has the existing database collapsed with the Ministry of Women’s Condition and Rights demise, but no one single method of collecting data seems to follow any statistically reliable technique. As gender becomes a fashionable topic and more organizations are interested in working in the area, there is a gap between accepted definitions of sexual and other types of gender based violence and those of many field workers who don’t seem to have an adequate or appropriate idea about the nature of the issue.

Haitian Institutions

Haiti is one of those paradoxical places where weak institutions have led to a failed-state-like modus operandi. For several years now, Haiti has been struggling to maintain the rule of law and democratic institutions within the boundaries of its territory. However, it has not yet managed to do so. The several accounts regarding the practically absent state in different instances of Haiti’s society is contrasted to the formal existence of a government structure and political leaders.

Haiti’s paradox becomes even more complex when considering the absence of an internal conflict that accounts for failing state institutions and the disastrous humanitarian situation. Despite the absence of organized violence against the state or against different internal groups, Haiti’s current landscape resembles that of a post-conflict situation, marked by strongly opposite political groups, a weak state and extreme levels of humanitarian needs.

This situation has led many NGOs to establish field teams in Haiti. Unfortunately, most

of them have not conducted a real assessment of Haiti's situation or most pressing needs, leading to uncoordinated humanitarian relief services, and more worrisome, an unbreakable cycle of aid dependency. Aid is currently being diverted to NGOs and institutions established in Haiti, whilst the government remains without the political and economic power to assume its basic functions and strengthen its institutions. On the other side, Haiti is said to be one of the most corrupt countries on the globe. In fact, since the earthquake, despite the money that has been donated to Haiti's government, just a few buildings have been re-built, leading many observers to conclude that the best way to reconstruct Haiti, is by providing funds to companies and organizations willing to use it for designated purposes, rather than to Haitian actors.

In regards to gender, there is a National Plan under construction which includes a transversal gender approach to all areas. However, there is a significant gap between the official plans and what can realistically be accomplished. Most of the actors argue that women's status in Haitian society is reflected in its limited presence in the government structure and in the brief attention the current government has given to the topic.

Still, several of its ministries are involved with projects that aim to improve women's conditions, particularly in regard to SGBV and other forms of violence. The Ministries of Women's Condition and Right, of Health, and of Justice, seem to be the most active in the area, especially because it is within their area that women confront the most serious challenges, as illustrated by the difficulties to access medical care and the justice system. However, the most troubled of Haiti's institutions seems to be the Haitian National Police. Because Haiti has a formal government and a formally established national police, all UN's actions have to pass through Haitian institutions, such as the police and military components, this, according to most interviewees, accounts for their limited possibilities in help-

ing. In particular, it is said that as HNP has the mandate for the executive policing, much of the work that could have been done in the security area is undermined by HNP's lack of capability and will.

Despite the criticism, however, Haitian institutions have shown improvement throughout the years. From the complete absence of a governmental structure and police unit, Haiti now has a functioning government and police. Moreover, President Martelly has repeatedly announced his intentions to reconstitute Haitian armed forces, dismantled since 1995. His intentions, however, have gone only as far as official speeches and it remains unclear who Haiti's Army would be defending the country from, and who would pay for the financial costs. As for now, Haitian police is the only armed arm of Haiti's government, along with MINUSTAH's police and military forces that serve Haitian state.

Ministry of Women's Condition and Rights

The Ministry of Women's Condition and Rights is one of them. Created in 1994, the Ministry was envisioned to promote women's rights in the light of Haiti's commitment to the Committee to the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Specifically, according to its current Minister, Mrs. Michel Marjory, the Ministry is responsible for identifying, defining, elaborating and working on plans oriented towards the improvement of women's situation in Haiti.

The Ministry works on two primary goals: 1. The promotion and defense of women's rights and; 2. Monitoring of the gender situation. The elaboration of Plans are thus focused on advancing and generating public policies that promote and strengthen gender equality within Haitian institutions and the society in general.

The Ministry also develops joint actions with other governmental institutions, namely, the Ministries of Justice, of Health and of Social Welfare,

along with the Haitian Police. Each partnership focuses on a different area of action, emphasizing an overall improvement of women's condition and status in Haitian society.

In regard to non-governmental partners, the Ministry names UNICEF as the main partner in projects related to education, cholera, violence prevention and raising awareness campaigns. An uncommon initiative carried out by the Ministry is the Youth Brigade, constituted by young men and women between 18 and 30 years old trained to provide immediate response to victims of violence. They are also responsible for reporting cases to the Ministry and work in a voluntary basis.

Despite the Ministry's efforts, it lacks political strength. In fact, as the newly established president Martelly struggles to gather domestic support and legitimacy, different interviewees said that there are plans to terminate the work of the Ministry.

As is the case with other government institutions, it is said that the earthquake took the lives of important Haitian women and men that were strongly advocating for women's rights. According to the Social Science Research Center (SSRC), since the pillar of the women's movement perished during the earthquake, the fight against gender inequality in Haiti is cracked.³

Amongst the important activists, the center names: Myriam Merlet, Minister of Women's Condition and Rights and founder of the umbrella National Coordination for Advocacy on Women's Rights (CONAP); Magalie Marcelin, founder of KayFamn, the only shelter for victims of gender based violence; Anne-Marie Coriolan, founder of Solidarité Fanm Ayisyèn (SOFA), one of Haiti's largest women's advocacy groups; and Myrna Narcisse, Director General of the Ministry of Women's Condition and Rights.

Haitian Police

After the disbandment of Haiti's armed forces in 1995 and with the important push of the second international intervention in Haiti initiated in 1994, Haiti's National Police was created in 1995. Its main objective was to restore democracy and to maintain itself as an independent institution, having received specialized training by UN contributors particularly the US, Canada and France. However, efforts have been insufficient to overcome HNP's main challenges.

HNP is formed by security forces, by two separated units, the Correction officers and the Coast guard, and by the Special Forces unit wearing a blue uniform and called CIMO. HNP's special forces team was considered by UNPol as highly capable and professional, in contrast to the ordinary HNP officer. Correction officers and Coast Guard members, though, seem to have similar problems as those encountered within HNP overall personnel.

The 16-year-old Haitian police is under equipped, underprepared, depopulated and unable to respond to most calls for assistance. Moreover, it lacks inspirational leadership and its poor performance is related to mismanagement, the presence of corrupt police officers and the harmful influence exercised by former members of the Haitian army over the institution. HNP is further appointed as a distrusted organization, accused of participating and conniving with criminal activities. Most international actors interviewed attributed the police's extremely violent behavior as the main reason for the population's mistrust in the police.

Nonetheless, as also informed by interviewees, the HNP seem to be afraid of the Haitian population in general and in fact the international military is designated as the third line of security in joint operations to offer protection for both the HNP and UNPol. From this perspective, it seems that there is a cycle of distrust and violence that feeds and reinforces HNP's poor performance. HNP's unsatisfactory re-

³ Available at: <http://www.ssrc.org/features/pages/haiti-now-and-next/1338/1428/>

sponse and the weakness of its judiciary system frustrates and infuriates victims and the population in general.

As a matter of fact, Haiti's prisons are overcrowded and conditions are below minimum standards. A correction officer commented that the situation within prisons is worrisome. There are several detainees that haven't been judged, some of whom are not even criminals but witnesses of crimes who ended up thrown in prison "by accident". Some prisons do not have beds or adequate facilities such as kitchens, medical centers, etc. However, because of the push on gender themes, the female prison is in much better conditions in comparison to the others. Some would point out though that this is discriminatory rather than positive action, as within correction units, everybody, men and women, are victims of the system.

The professionalization of HNP is one of MINUSTAH's core objectives and a necessary step towards the country's reconstruction and democracy institutionalization. Since 2004, HNP has been trained and reequipped and so it has slowly improved, although there is still a long way to go.

In regard to gender though, the situation is worrisome. As far as it could be verified there is only one team trained in responding to SGVB crimes in Haiti. Its police station is located within the Brazilian military base in Bel-Air, a yellow zone area. In an interview with those police officers it was verified that they lacked adequate training and were extremely under equipped, lacking basic infra-structure to be able to adequately attend victims. More importantly, it seemed as if they had no motivation to attend victims who seemed to prefer the Brazilian soldiers care rather than that of the police.

There is an ongoing project to reform HNP's guidelines and Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) that would include a transversal gender approach and specific training. Moreover, MINUSTAH is working to increase the number

of female HNP officers, not only to promote a more balanced institution, but also to provide better responses to SGVB victims.

Although these initiatives seem to be worthwhile and symbolize a growing interest in improving Haitian women's life conditions, it becomes clear that there is a structural problem in Haiti's security institutions and a public security reform is an urgent need. Addressing these problems without reforming the overall HNP structure and organization basis will not solve these problems, but only offer temporary solutions to what is a structural problem.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite all problems, it is clear that there are Haitian governmental institutions, such as the Ministry of Women's Condition, that are concerned about the problem of SGBV in Haiti. Nonetheless, the national justice system and national police lacks the capacity to confront these issues and currently cannot provide adequate responses to SGBV cases in the country. More importantly and concerning, it seems that gender issues have not yet acquired importance in the national political agenda. Despite a number of local NGOs involved with the matter and attempting to advance a "National Action Plan" to empower women and improve their vulnerable status, efforts are being hampered by the lack of institutionalized and official efforts coming from the government. Some recommendations to improve Haiti's response in the area would be to:

1. Promote affirmative action at governmental level to promote women's participation in the political, economic and social life of the Haitian state. Currently, efforts of this sort are led by governmental structures that lack political strength and voice and by local organizations that haven't been able to influence government's agenda.

2. Promote gender balance actions within the Haitian police, following UN's premise that the

increase of women within the security and military institutions would have positive effects in the treatment and eradication of SGBV.

3. Promote more coordinated actions in the field amongst national and international actors involved in addressing gender issues. While there is a lack of consensus amongst Haitian organizations, they also play against each other, undermining the possibility of enhancing joint and coordinated actions that could be more effective. At the same time, some of these actors refuse to work with the international community. International actors usually have funds and could support local actions to empower women and protect them.

In regard to cooperation efforts with the UN agencies and other MINUSTAH's actors that are involved with the problem of sexual and gender based violence in Haiti, it is clear that

there is lack of coordination. Some of these organizations consider MINUSTAH as part of the problem or just do not want to cooperate for political reasons. It is necessary to remember that many Haitians consider MINUSTAH an occupying force that should leave, thus making establishing cooperation linkages a difficult goal. Nonetheless, as part of MINUSTAH's mandate to enhance Haitian government institutions in the framework of democracy it could promote more actions to increase women's participation in the political and economic life of the Haitian state, as it is indeed already doing this through a program of the Gender Unit that promotes women candidates for political positions. UN-Women can also promote similar actions and has established partnerships with local actors to promote a similar agenda. It is important to work on a coordinated plan between all UN, local and international actors.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE UN IN HAITI

Haiti's political instability is well known in the international community. As a matter of fact, the UN's involvement with Haiti started in 1990, with the establishment of the United Nations Observer Group for the Verification of the Elections in Haiti (ONU-VEH). In 1991, after a coup that overthrew the democratically elected president, a joint UN-OAS (Organization of American States) mission was established, the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH). Finally in 1993, the first peacekeeping mission was authorized, the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). However it was only in 1995, after the increase of authorized deployed forces throughout 1994, that UNMIH assumed its functions. Until 2000 other UN peacekeeping missions were established in the country, such as the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH), the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti (UNTMIH), and the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), all with very limited accomplishments.

Haiti's political instability has been accompanied by increasing poverty and social problems, rated currently as the poorest country of the America's. In 2004, the international community watched again another political uprising

in Haiti. The President Jean Bertrand Aristide was forced to flee the country after several political uprisings resulted in another coup d'état. The transitional government was assumed by Prime-Minister Gérard Latortue, and MINUSTAH fully assumed its role with the mandate of reestablishing democratic institutions and a safe environment for Haitian civilian population. Elections were held in 2006 and René Préval was elected president.

The years of 2006 and 2007 marked the entrance of a renewed security situation when several of the most dangerous districts within the capital of Port-au-Prince were pacified by UN soldiers. Gangs were dismantled and there was no organized violence against the Haitian state. In that context, insecurity would be more related to fights amongst different gang members, drug and arms trafficking, robberies and kidnapping.

This context led to another phase in the reconstruction of devastated Haiti. The years of 2008 to 2010 left the "peace enforcement" phase behind and focused on strengthening Haitian government and institutions as well as maintaining a controlled security situation. However, the 2010 earthquake had disastrous effects on the fragile administrative and economic

situation of the Caribbean country. The earthquake whose epicenter was just 15km southeast the capital Port-au-Prince caused the death of 222,570 people and another 300,572 injured. 105,000 houses were completely destroyed, while another 188,383 houses were severely damaged, leading to a US\$7.2 billion worth in damage that surpassed by 20% Haiti's 2009 entire GDP⁴.

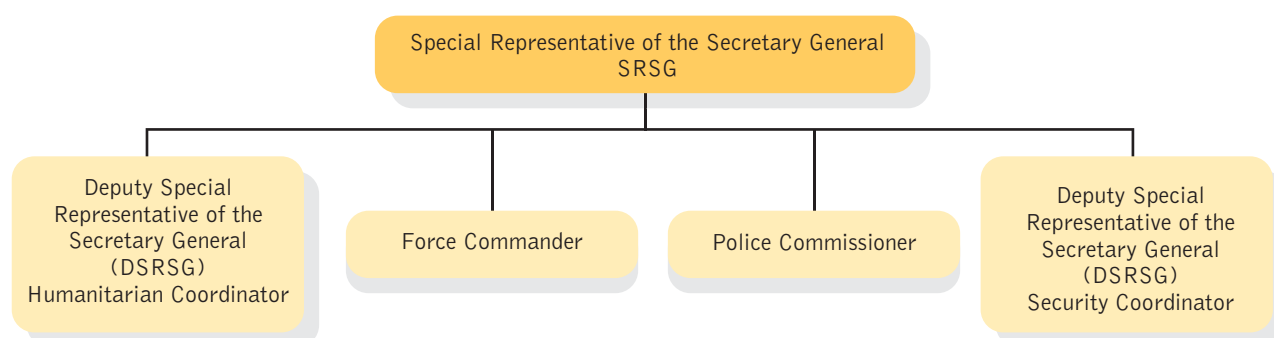
The fragile government had its share of loss: 60% of government buildings fell or were seriously damaged and 30% of government employees perished. The Haitian National Police lost many of its officers and its already weak capacity was worsened.

This hideous situation has deteriorated the living conditions in Haiti as thousands were dislocated and have since then been living in

to be ready to attempt again its first independent steps since 2004. Currently, MINUSTAH's role is to support and strengthen Haiti's national institution and conversations regarding the slow demobilization of MINUSTAH's force have already started.

MINUSTAH's Civilian Personnel

As in all UN missions, MINUSTAH is under civilian control. The Special Representative of the Secretary General has the difficult task of coordinating all the efforts and integrating the military, police and civilian components. As of June 30th 2011, MINUSTAH'S civilian personnel summed up to 2123 personnel, being 564 international civilian personnel, 1,338 local civilian staff and 221 United Nations Volunteers⁵.



the IDP camps all over the country. Vulnerable groups such as women and children were harshly affected. While more than 100,000 children became orphans, many women were targeted and became victims of widespread sexual violence.

As the already fragile economy and political infra-structure of Haiti yield to the 7.0 magnitude earthquake, the security and humanitarian situation worsened to alarming levels, leading the Security Council to authorize an increase force of almost 9,000 military troops and 4,500 police. 20 months after the earthquake, it still looks like it just happened; however, Haiti seems

In regard to sexual and other forms of GBV the main civilian organizations within MINUSTAH that deal with the problem are the Gender Unit, who is responsible for establishing a transversal gender perspective with the military and police components, and UN-Women which is focused on carrying on joint efforts with the local government. Along with both organizations, high rank civilian authorities were interviewed and it became clear at MINUSTAH's high level the problem is acknowledged even if there is a long path ahead for achieving lasting results.

It is important to note that the cultural feature of the SGBV problem in Haiti was not con-

4 RESDAL, *Newsletter: Observatorio de la Mujer en Operaciones de Paz*, Buenos Aires: RESDAL, August 2011.

5 Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minustah/facts.shtml>. Access on: 09/19/2011.

sidered as a dead end but, more importantly as a way to better understand the problem and address it correctly. Haitian women are *“culturally and institutionally under protected”* and in the last three years there has been an increase in SGVB and murders cases, stressing that more cases have been reported outside the IDP camps. Besides improving the security context, it is necessary to advance women’s conditions in general, improving their status within Haiti’s society and empowering them. Increasing women’s participation in political life is also an important way of transforming Haiti into a less threatening environment for women. However, as there are competing local groups and organizations that end up playing against one another, forming a national consortium to work with the government would be an important way to coordinate efforts.

In regard to security, high rank officials coincide on the necessity of improving peacekeepers training in gender issues, explaining that if they are gender sensitive they can better identify and address the problem. However, because the military usually stay only 6 months, the military component learning curve is very steep as there is constant personnel rotation and limited accumulation of knowledge in the area. DPKO gender guidelines are unknown for most police and military troops and actors on the field tend to ignore this problem interpreting it as someone else’s problem.

Finally, an increased presence of women amongst the military and police is an important way of improving MINUSTAH’s actions in regard to sexual and other forms of GBV.

Gender Unit:

MINUSTAH’S Gender Unit is primarily involved with activities that promote the empowerment of women on the one hand and preventing the recurrences of SGBV in Haiti on the other. While the former is addressed by increasing women’s participation in political

processes, the latter is addressed by improving the Police capabilities to respond to SGBV cases, particularly within the IDP camps.

The Gender Unit regards the security situation within the camps along with the economic and social conditions of the population inhabiting these areas as important factors in explaining the current widespread cases of GBV in Haiti. However, they alert that *“conflicts and natural disasters certainly deteriorate and impacts on the recurrences of GBV cases. GBV was, is and will continue to be present in Haiti after MINUSTAH leaves, that is why it is imperative to improve local capacity in responding to this issue.”*

Their strategy is based on three pillars: Raising awareness campaigns; 2. UNPol and HNP training, and 3. Advocacy activities. Each of these strategies aim to gather further support for this cause as well as improving all actions related to the prevention, treatment and follow up on GBV cases, particularly sexually related ones.

Currently, there are 12 police stations with a specific GBV area and it is their intention to create Special Units within the HNP dedicated to the matter. It was emphasized that it is imperative to create a protection cluster with all UN components, civil society and local authorities, so that efforts of all involved actors can be coordinated ultimately having a better impact in the field.

The military contingents receive 30-minute induction training in gender when they arrive in the mission. The Gender Unit recognizes it is an area that needs to be improved and comments that it is their intention to carry out specific “gender” training to the military to be fulfilled after a month or so of the soldiers arrival, aiming to capture their attention and explain gender issues more thoroughly.

The police component on its part has been part of several of the Gender Unit’s projects, particularly due to their own mandate of monitoring and mentoring the HNP. Besides having

recently launched new SOPs (Standard Operation Procedures) that include a whole section on how to respond to SGBV, the UNPol is widely involved in the HNP training and in the monitoring of its activities having thus a central role in the strengthening of HNP response capabilities.

Regarding the cultural aspects of SGBV, it is commonly expected that all involved actors should know Haitian laws and justice system: *"You cannot argue that SGBV is a cultural matter in Haiti when its society has created a body of laws that considers rape a crime."* There is a limit, we could add, between what can be considered as a cultural issue and what would be part of the official discourse to justify the lack of purposed actions to address the problem.

Given all projects and efforts, it seems that the Gender Unit capacity to play a more important role should be addressed. Most of those that are on the streets and encounter daily cases of SGBV are unaware of the Unit's projects and role in the mission. More worrisome is the fact that many do not seem to have a clear idea regarding basic definitions such as gender and SGBV.

In fact, despite the UN's recommendation of creating gender focal points within the military and police components, not all of them seem to be aware of this necessity and amongst the military in particular, don't seem to know what a gender focal point is. In 2011 every mission received a directive from the Office of Military Affairs in New York urging for the designation of a gender focal point at the military component headquarters level. Within the contingents, it seems that only a few countries have a policy dedicated to clarify the importance and functions of gender focal points, while most of them appoint gender officers with no precise tasks.

The existence of a gender unit itself is already an accomplishment. While gender has been considered a taboo for many years, the current international scenario and the emphasis put on

gender balance and SGBV opens a window of opportunity for the Gender Unit to highjack MINUSTAH's agenda, favoring a renewed emphasis on gender issues at the high level of the military component command.

UN Women

UN Women's main focus in Haiti is promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women as the main ingredients for a successful reconstruction effort and the accomplishment of development goals. For this purpose its representatives have emphasized the need to remove structural obstacles, such as cultural attitudes and institutions that prevent the progress of women within the Haitian society.

One of its main areas of engagement is that of increasing women's voice, whether through the political participation or in a broader sense, such as within professional organizations or in civil society. Another important priority for UN Women is economic development. As most of Haitian households are headed by women there is an urgent need to encourage employment opportunities and create livelihood opportunities for women.

In regard to SGBV, their representatives view SGBV as having always been present in Haiti, before and after the earthquake, and intrinsically related to legal, cultural and social aspects of the Haitian society. Nonetheless, they emphasize that women and girls have been particularly vulnerable to violence in the post disaster environment: *"Women are at the forefront of any humanitarian disaster. They play key roles in ensuring the survival of families, rebuilding communities, and providing food and health care. It is not optional to empower women. It is essential."*⁶

Therefore, UN-Women's main concern is making clear that the problem of SGBV is not earthquake-related, and in order to solve it there needs to be a National Action Plan with

⁶ Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/2011/01/un-women-on-the-ground-haitis-women-a-year-after-the-earthquake/>

national partners to implement long-term policies of change regarding gender equality.

Amid UN women's actions in the area there is an ongoing project designed to enhance women and young girl's security with the military and police components of MINUSTAH, as well as Haitian institutions. Their main objective is to promote a safer environment for women in public spaces and identify local leaders to raise awareness regarding women and girls vulnerability.

Within the IDP sites –as they call the camps– programs for continued assistance for victims is being promoted where they can access medical, legal and psychological services as well as prevention actions. They have also established a safe haven for young girls that have experienced violence and two new safe houses are to be established in the north and southeast regions.

Many of the interviewed actors have presented UN-Women as being extremely closed and uncoordinated with other organizations resulting in the duplication of efforts. According to some of the interviewees, since UN women is the face of the UN's work in regard to gender, it is the organization that most receives financial resources. Paradoxically, it doesn't seem to be willing to develop a concerted action with other international actors.

Whether or not the UN-Women's lack of cooperative actions exists and is a deliberate act or a conscious approach could not be verified due to the limited time. However, it is important to note that in situations like that encountered in Haiti, several organizations within and outside the UN system constantly compete for resources, damaging the image of each other is part of a sad although indispensable game in the world of such organizations.

Conclusions and recommendations:

There is verifiable lack of coordinated actions and of top-down guidelines for concerted policies. More worrisome is the perception that

there is an ongoing competition between the agencies, each with a different approach to the SGBV problem in Haiti and with competing budgets.

In regard to UN's overall strategy to improve the conditions of women and young girl's on the field, and based on its four main pillars:

1. It is clear that the civilian actors promote coordinated actions with local women groups and attempt to promote actions that empower and protect Haitian women. However, as UN institutions conflict and compete with each other, these efforts may be undermined.
2. Although the highest positions within MINUSTAH are currently occupied by men, there are an important number of women working at decision making levels, such as the heads of the UN-Women and of the Gender Unit.
3. The interviewed civilians are worried about strengthening MINUSTAH's capacity in responding to sexual and other forms of GBV in Haiti, as expressed by its will to improve police and military training as well as its SOPs. However, there is a lot yet to be done within the military component.
4. The civilians are also attempting to positively affect Haitian's capacity to respond to the various types of violence against women, as illustrated by the training of the Haitian National Police and the coordinated work of MINUSTAH's section of Justice and Human Rights to improve Haiti's justice system.

In order to improve MINUSTAH's overall efforts in Haiti, some recommendations were identified:

- Top-down gender sensitive initiatives promoting coordinated actions amongst all MINUSTAHs components and other non-UN actors.
- There is a pressing need for creating a protection cluster with all involved actors. Currently the absence of a central coordination

has led to the duplication of efforts and parallel activities that could have complemented each other.

- Gender Unit projects should be more involved with the military component; an important starting point would be to clarify their role in protecting civilians as a way to support the prevention of SGVB.
- The system should urge contributing countries to appoint gender focal points to each military battalion and promote coordinated actions with them as well as better integration and consolidated cooperation amongst police gender focal point.
- The creation of SOPs for the military component in regard to SGVB should be addressed.
- UN-Women could perform more coordinated actions with other UN civilian organizations, particularly the Gender Unit.

The Military Component

There are currently 8,728 military troops in Haiti, of which 5078, or 58%, are Latin American troops. Latin America's problematic socio-economic context has been paradoxically considered as a comparative advantage in peacekeeping operations, as troops recognize needs of the local population and as such are in a better position to provide an adequate response. It is also important to note that Haiti shares the Hispaniola Island with the Dominican Republic, a Latin American country, where many Haitians live or travel on a frequent basis.

The Latin American military personnel tends to see other contributing regions as culturally very different from Haitians and -in their view- thus less accepted, as was confirmed during the interviews. One of the main indicated allegations was that Latin Americans were culturally more prone to a closer approximation with the local population, going as far as developing friendship ties.

Table n.1: Military troops contributor countries by region⁷

Countries	Military		
	Male	Female	Total
Argentina	686	36	722
Bolivia	190	18	208
Brazil	2,168	17	2,185
Chile	502	8	510
Ecuador	67	0	67
Guatemala	136	12	148
Paraguay	130	0	130
Peru	371	1	372
Uruguay	1,059	43	1,102
Japan	220	3	223
Nepal	1,053	22	1,075
Philippines	150	6	156
Sri Lanka	958	0	958
Republic of Korea	236	4	240
Canada	8	2	10
United States of America	7	1	8
France	2	0	2

As a matter of fact, the close contact with the local population by Latin American troops had been underlined also by other actors as an important factor for the success of some operations carried out in Haiti. In a series of contacts performed with UN personnel in NY⁸, it was emphasized that there is an increasing interest in evaluating the "Latin American way" of doing peacekeeping, which includes great approximation with the local population and a friendly attitude in the field.

However, in regard to sexual and other types of GBV, the military component is behind. Despite the UN's mandate in regard to the protection of civilians, particularly vulnerable groups, the military component doesn't seem to be

⁷ Canada, the United States and France do not have military contingents deployed and the number refers to military staff. Moreover, the countries' totals include both contingent and staff personnel working for the UN.

⁸ These contacts were established throughout the participation that some RESDAL members had in DPKO activities during the years of 2010 and 2011. They include the participation in the formulation of Peacekeeping guidelines for the police and military in 2010, the participation at a 10th Anniversary of Resolution 1325 in November 2010 and a visit to set the field trip to Haiti in March 2011.

largely involved in the prevention, treatment and eradication of SGVB in Haiti. The reasons appointed were:

1. When SGVB cases were reported, it was said that the police and particularly the Haitian police had the mandate to investigate and detain criminals; as the police lack capability and structure most of the detained were released back to the society.
2. When SGVB cases were reported, it was said that there is a cultural problem in which violence against women is considered normal, even by the victims, who seem to 1. Defend the perpetrator (many cases occur within the family structure, by the father, husband and other close relatives), 2. Preferred not to report, fearing the consequences of further violence in case they return home, or 3. Didn't seem to see violence as abnormal and were unaware of their rights as women.
3. Some of the interviewed contingents would affirm that no SGVB cases were reported, to two different possible conclusions: 1. Different regions may have more or less cases of SGVB, requiring further research and closer contact with local and international NGOs that deal with the problem, 2. Contingents may not perceive SGVB cases, requiring further training in gender approaches.

The last point leads to an important matter that was observed in all contingents. Gender training, both the national pre-deployment as well as the in locus induction training, is primarily focused on SEA and sexual harassment within the contingents, there is little to no training on sexual and other forms of SGVB and their role as military in preventing, treating and eradicating SGBV.

Despite the UN's guidelines in regard to SGBV, it was observed that no special actions to protect women and girls as a vulnerable group were implemented by any of the visited contingents. It was said that their ostensive military presence was a dissuasion factor to inhibit vio-

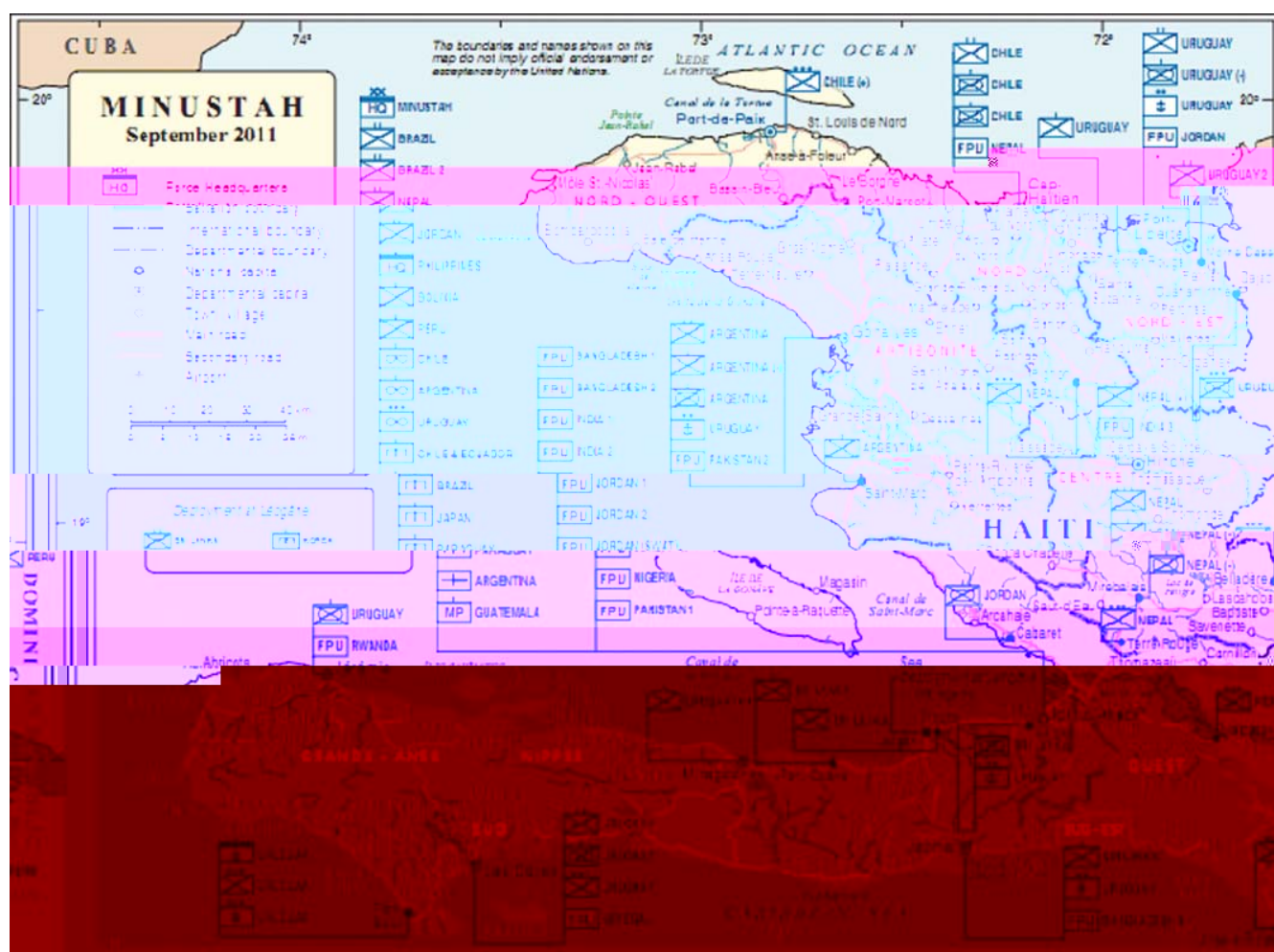
lence that has been working and has improved the security situation for the women and population in general in Haiti.

Moreover, it was also verified that the different contingents have different approaches to the problem, although none of them seem to care much about gender issues. While Brazil's battalion show uniformity in doctrines and actions, emphasizing a closer collaboration with the population and constant and ostensive military presence, Uruguayan battalions maintain important differences in the organizational structure and behavior. Argentina on its part seems to have the cultural factor as part of the official discourse for the failure or slow improvement, both Chile and Uruguay contingents are unaware of SGVB cases and do not regard the approximation with the population as an important factor for the success of their actions.

These few observations show the lack of uniformity in actions and procedures that should come as a top-down initiative or guideline. Moreover, the absence of Gender focal points and the lack of knowledge in regard to the existence of this position (with the exception of Argentina) also show that within MINUSTAH's structure, the Gender Unit hasn't been able to disseminate common policies and training to the troops.

It was interesting to come to the conclusion that beyond analyzing the work done by the military component in regard to SGVB, RESDAL's research project served another end: increasing awareness of SGBV and gender approaches in a peace operation.

Finally, it is important to mention that despite the UN's urge to incorporate more women in the first combat lines in order to improve UN's response to GBV, particularly sexual related on the field, the percentage of military women on the field was of only 2% amongst Latin American troops and 1.4% within the overall military personnel.



MINUSTAH structure

The military component is under the leadership of the civilian leadership represented by the Special Representative of the Secretary General, and the Security and Humanitarian Coordinators. The military component is under Brazil's leadership. Each of the military contingents has an area of responsibility covering all Haitian territory. The most complicated areas are identified within Port-au-Prince and are mainly under Brazilian responsibility. These are also the areas in which more SGBV cases are said to happen.

The countries

➤ Argentina

Since the beginning of the mission in 2004 Argentina has sent battalions to contribute to

peace efforts in Haiti. Currently, 713 Argentine troops are responsible for the department of Artibonite only a few hours from the capital Port-au-Prince. Different from those countries in the capital, the Argentinean battalion in Artibonite hasn't confronted the challenges imposed by the 2010 earthquake that devastated the country. However, due to the characteristics of the terrain in which its main base is located, in Gonaives, it has periodically confronted several humanitarian emergencies due to floods and hurricanes.

Argentina also has an Aviation Unit located in Port-au-Prince, which is under MINUSTAH's command and exercise its function according to the overall mission's necessity being independent from the Argentine Battalion (ARGBATT) in Artibonite. Moreover, Argentina has established a military hospital in Port-au-Prince, responsible for attending all

UN personnel, including the military, the police and civilian components. In the aftermath of the earthquake the Argentine hospital was the only that remained and so it opened to the community and attended Haitian people and civil society personnel injured.

Argentina's Chief of Staff and other high ranking officials are also based in Port-au-Prince, having participated actively in CIMIC activities in the capital area. In fact, along with the Aviation Unit, the Argentine military in Port-au-Prince has adopted a school located within one of the biggest IDP camps, helping in the construction of its structure and in the care of the children from the area.

ARGBATT has a separated and independent company located in the lower zone of Artibonite Department, in the city of Saint Marc. There, there are 157 troops amongst which some are from the Special Forces. They provide security and relief for the Haitian population in the area.

Two hours away, in the city of Gonaives, is the rest of the battalion, composed of another three companies: one Army infantry company, one Marine infantry company, and one support services company mainly composed of Army personnel. The ARGBATT is said to be one of the few in Haiti that is a joint battalion, counting with personnel from the three forces. Despite a few problems in coordination, the integration has been successful as described by the battalion commander. Each of the forces has a pre-deployment training, and after a month personnel fulfills a joint training in the Argentine Peace Operation Training Center (CAECOPAZ).

Because the Argentine battalion is deployed outside the capital in a rural area, its challenges are different from those encountered by those deployed in the capital. The interviewed personnel underlies that as relief and humanitarian aid is focused in Port-au-Prince the people in the countryside within their area of respon-

sibility are less accustomed to charity and more willing to improve their life conditions. Also the cooperation with NGOs and other UN humanitarian agencies is easier as there are less actors and thus less competition. They usually do the security of NGOs that provide aid for the population in their area and no conflict situation was reported by those interviewed.

Argentina and SGBV

Argentina has carried out important gender policies within its armed forces and has tried throughout the years to follow UN's Resolutions in regard to women peace and security, being an important case to be analyzed and tested. It has been present in MINUSTAH since 2004, and has currently 721 deployed personnel.

In regard to SGVB, the Argentine personnel both from Port-au-Prince and from Artibonite area commonly attributed the problem of violence against women in Haiti to cultural issues, affirming that sexuality and family are seen in a different way by Haitian people leading to the treatment of SGVB as something "normal" and ordinary. In fact, before going to Haiti, troops receive a pre-deployment training that includes a culture course in which Haitian family structure, their values and customs are explained to them.

Most interviewees underlined the important role of women as the center of Haitian society, being responsible for the economic support of the family and the reference for children. Reports speak of cases of domestic violence in which men beat the women for not bringing enough money or food to their homes. In regard to sexual violence some have said that sexuality in Haiti is open and people usually have more than one partner, both men and women. Sex is something ordinary, nothing special. In some cases, women are victims of sexual violence but don't denounce as they

don't perceive it as a form of violence.

The cultural dynamics of SGBV was a common thread pinpointed not only by the Argentine personnel but also by almost every other contingent. Despite some variation they all referred to the important role of women allied to the paradoxical vulnerable and subjected position they hold. It was also agreed upon that a

to assess whether their presence support the treatment of SGBV in these areas.

➤ **Brazil**

Brazil's presence in Haiti is an important part of its foreign policy and one of its main pillars in becoming a global player in international politics. Since 2004 the country is head of MINUSTAH's military component having had more than 14,000 military troops that has served in Haiti. Currently, Brazil has a total of 2185 men in Haiti, 1485 in the Brazilian Battalion I (BRABATT I)⁹ and 810 soldiers in the Brazilian Battalion II (BRABATT II). Despite some marked differences between the two battalions, some elements are common in both and usually refer to the bigger picture of Brazil's strategy in Haiti.

Brazil's strategy is based on the prevention and dissuasion of violence through a constant and ostensive presence allied to the fulfillment of civil-military activities focused on disseminating a positive image of the country amongst the population. Brazil's military presence is the most ostensive as shown by the equipment, the type of vehicles and weaponry used. Also, its areas of responsibility are the most complex and volatile encompassing some of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince.

Brazil's strategy in Haiti has been the object of international interest, especially during the periods of 2006/2007 when several areas dominated by gangs and characterized by high rates of criminality were pacified, allowing the population to return to their homes and have the right to move throughout the city. In 2004, when Brazil and MINUSTAH arrived in Haiti there were several zones in which they could not enter due to the extremely insecure conditions. Some of these areas included the neighborhoods of Bell-air, Cité Soleil and Cité

Militaire, all of which have been pacified by Brazilian and other Latin American troops.

Brazil's military actions in Haiti have the support of its civil society and main foreign policy branches. In fact the Brazilian Embassy in Port-au-Prince provides resources and participates in several of its CIMIC activities. An important Brazilian NGO, Viva Rio also supports the CIMIC activities developed by both battalions, having its headquarters in Bell-air it develops several activities with the community, promoting the reinsertion of young delinquents in the society and contributing to diminishing the criminality rates in the area.

Brazil and SGBV

In regard to SGBV Brazilian personnel seems to have a different view of the role of the military in addressing this problem as it was observed through the interviews. The country is involved in carrying out activities that aims to empower Haitian women, cutting the cycle of violence that they are subjected to. However, as observed in the other contingents there aren't specific actions directed towards the prevention of violence against women, which is said to be addressed through its ostensive presence and consequent dissuasion. The focus seems to be providing security for the population in general and promoting the country's image through its extensive CIMIC activities and quick impact projects.

The ostensive presence of military personnel and Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects have supported the decline of criminality rates and consequently inhibited and dissuaded violence against women in its areas of responsibility.

The current Community Violent Reduction (CVR)¹⁰ project developed by both Battalions is

⁹ A marine and an engineer company are part of the Brazilian Battalion I accounting for the difference in regard to Brazilian Battalion II.

¹⁰ Community Violence Reduction refers to the UN strategy in Haiti. During the first years of the mission, UN's strategy was based on DDR, that is Disarmament demobilization and Reintegration. However, as the security condition improved and gang activity reduced, the strategy was changed and is currently focused on reducing violence through social projects.

the so called “Clean Block”, has two main stages. In the first, a “cash for work” program is established and the population from the selected blocks receives money to clean their block. In the second stage, those that have cleaned the block receive materials to paint their houses and a light pole based on sun energy is built on the block, improving thus the appearance and the security of the areas in which the project was implemented.

According to a Lieutenant Colonel who has actively participated during the first time the “clean block” was implemented, this project has contributed to provide some income to the population, as well as to promote cleanliness and healthier conditions in the blocks, additionally, it has embellished the houses and finally it has promoted security through the better light conditions and engagement of population in the project. Currently, there are other seven blocks under the project, four carried out by BRABATT I and three carried out by BRABATT II.

As gender gains importance on the UN agenda, MINUSTAH has promoted actions to benefit women. From August to October 2010, some few countries have reported to MINUSTAH’s CIMIC Center some of their actions directed towards empowering women and counted how many of them have been benefited. Brazil was one of them.

These actions are still very basic and consist of distribution of care kits, diapers, food, potable water, the provision of security for NGOs involved in the distribution of similar items and lectures on personal hygiene amongst others. However, since then no further gender reports were made and despite the fact that all CIMIC activities have been extensively reported and documented the number of women benefited and actions aiming to empower women are not differentiated harming the assessment of Brazil’s actions in this area.

The main challenge, though, remains that

of evaluating the impact of these projects in the reduction of SGBV in Brazil’s area of responsibility. It is well known that correct data is a rare resource in Haiti, even more regarding SGBV as so many cases remain unreported and many of those that are reported incur in mistaken definitions of SGBV lacking a common pattern of reporting and a joint database. However, another challenge is imposed by the lack of awareness regarding sexual and other forms SGBV which results in the absence of researches that evaluate the impact of these valuable projects in regard to this specific issue.

It is necessary to remember that these projects have a positive impact in the reduction of SGBV because they were conceived to reduce criminality in general and not violence against women specifically. Consequently, as the battalion themselves evaluate the effects of their projects, SGBV is not pinpointed and consequently the impact of these projects on SGBV cannot currently be perceived.

The same is true in regards to Brazil’s ostensive presence to prevent and dissuade violence. Since 2004 the security environment in Haiti has improved a lot inasmuch many argue that Haiti no longer needs as many soldiers especially in combat positions. Police and engineers are said to be the most needed in Haiti. The interviewed soldiers all agreed that despite the existence of disturbances in some areas, the constant patrols, the soldier’s posture and weaponry and vehicles used inhibit violence. For them, this is the basis of the civilian protection mandate, that is, to disseminate imminent threats and provide a safe environment for the civilian population.

As violence is prevented by Brazil’s constant and ostensive military presence, it is said that SGBV is also prevented. However, once again, the impact of the country’s actions cannot be assessed due to lack of research and data focused on the matter. In this regard, prior to

the trip the team had received information on an initiative in which SGBV cases reported by Brazilian patrols were feeding a database, however such data could not be assessed during the field work. It was said the patrols reports were sensible and could not be shared, remaining thus the problem of the lack of research in this area.

Another important action was observed in one of the detachments of BRABATT II, located in Bel Air, one of the most complicated areas in Haiti in which criminality rates are amongst the highest in the country. The First Company of BRABATT II has established a permanent base within this area in order to mark its presence and dissuade violence. The place is also the base for a Commissariat of the Haitian National Police and for the UNPol, having both a special division to treat SGBV cases.

In a visit to this base it was said that since the occupation of the Fort National by Brazilian troops the population has increasingly sought medical assistance in the base, some of them regarding SGBV. Both the UNPol and HNP located within the Brazilian base referred that the population trusts Brazilian military and seeks them out before anyone else. The same is true for women victims of SGBV. According to the military present in the place the official procedure is to treat the women in their clinic and then report to the UNPol and HNP the SGBV cases in order to have the police investigation done. However, as Haitian police lack capabilities, the vast majority of cases remain unsolved and the victim does not obtain justice.

This illustrates one of the main challenges for the military to act in the prevention and eradication of SGBV. As its mandate and rules of engagement (ROE) prescribe, such cases ought to be reported and followed by the Haitian police and in its absence by the UNPol, hampering a more efficient action by the military in this area. This has not inhibited the military to perform actions such as carrying victims in their

vehicles to hospitals or allowing local civilians to enter the base in order to get treatment.

Finally, it is important to assess Brazil's engagement with UN's resolutions regarding Women, Peace and Security that aim to increase women's presence in complex emergencies as a way to prevent and eradicate SGBV in these areas. As opposed to other countries, Brazil's policy of incorporating women in its armed forces is far behind that of other countries within Latin America. Resolutions 1325 and 1820 are not well-known amongst the members of its armed forces and the participation of Brazilian women in peace operations is still very limited. This is a direct reflection of its national policy in which women are still not allowed to join combatant arms in the Army, which composes the absolute majority of Brazilian soldiers on the field. In fact out of 2185 Brazilian troops in Haiti, only 17 are women and all of them remain within the boundaries of the military base, being doctors, nurses, translators, etc. Some of the troops interviewed concurred that the presence of women in the patrols could support their work as in many of the incidents encountered Haitian women are involved and they believe the approximation would be easier if there were military women in direct contact with the population.

However, the limited presence of Brazilian women in the military shows this last point is not a consensus and many have also affirmed that the population does not distinguish military women and men and that more women would not make a significant difference.

➤ **Bolivia**

As of 2011, Bolivia has had a company in Haiti of 208 troops, 18 of which 18 are women, 5 Lieutenants from the Army and 11 civilian incorporated to provide service in the peace operation. Bolivia has sent peacekeepers to Haiti since 2006 and from that date on it has

actively participated in the peace efforts in that country.

Bolivia's area of responsibility is not a complicated area. For that reason, the security incidents are few. In regard to SGBV, Bolivia, along with Brazil, Guatemala, Nepal and Uruguay, is one of the few countries that have reported in September 2010 and May 2011 the number of local women benefited by its activities and social projects, showing concern in strengthening this vulnerable group within Haitian society. It was observed that amongst the visited countries Bolivia is the only one in which its military women participated periodically in patrols along with its male counterparts. It is also important to mention that Bolivia has followed MINUSTAH's CIMIC Center's guidelines of preparing a gender report in the year 2010/2011, underlining the number of women benefited by its actions. This submission hasn't been continuous by none of the contingents that have so far submitted them, resulting with the possibility of evaluating the impact of civil military activities in empowering women.

Despite the few number of women in Bolivian Armed forces, women's incorporation dates back to 1979, which means that soon there will be female generals in its army. The history of this incorporation is a discontinued one. The first time women were incorporated in the Army was in 1979, but vacancies for women were closed from 1975 to 1997. There aren't obstacles for the participation of women in combat specialties in the Army and Air Force, indicating that in the near future more and more women will be able to participate in peace operations in positions that allow closer contact with the population.

Bolivia and SGBV

The interview with Bolivian troops in Haiti show that they haven't encountered SGBV cases or haven't mentioned them. However, it is

important to notice two important actions that Bolivian troops carry out and that may incur a positive impact on the field.

Four of the five women that are currently in the Bolivian company in Haiti actively participate in the patrols and other activities carried out by Bolivian troops in its area of responsibility in Port-au-Prince. Although we could not perform interviews with these women, it was said that they are allowed to do everything that their male counterparts are allowed and thus have a close contact with local women and children on the field.

Another important action done by Bolivian troops refer to its CIMIC activities as reported in the gender report from May 2011 and which included the distribution of food (milk, biscuits, cakes), medical and dental care, oral hygiene tools and school supplies for women in its area of responsibility. The same kind of report was also delivered in September 2010. Nonetheless at that time the number of women benefited was not differentiated from the men. It would be important to research why Bolivian company restarted doing the reports and if the focus on women has a positive impact on its vulnerable status.

> Chile

Chile's Armed forces have been in Haiti since the beginning of the mission in 2004 and has held the position of Deputy Force Commander for a couple of times. An aviation unit and an Ecuadorian-Chilean engineer company stay in Port-au-Prince and a battalion is located in Cap Haïtien, in the north of the country.

The Chilean contingent comprises 510 troops, 7 of which are women. The battalion in Cap Haïtien is divided in three companies, being one Infantry of the Army, one of the Marine and a Service company. Its base is located in the city of Cap Haïtien, an area not affected by the earthquake. The companies are based in

three different places in the city, not far from one another.

Most of the incidents encountered by the Chilean battalion (CHIBATT) refer to political disturbances during the periods of elections. The kind of gang problem encountered in Port-au-Prince doesn't seem to have been present in the Cap Haïtien; in fact the city (which was the first capital of Haiti) seems to be much more organized and structured, less poor and less dangerous than the capital Port-au-Prince and the cities of Saint Marc and Gonaïves. However it is also important to notice that Chile's MOU with the UN include caveats assuring that Chilean troops will not be involved in anti drugs operations nor delinquents persecution, among others.

The current Chilean battalion seems to be less engaged in CIMIC activities than the other countries. It was said that these activities are intermittent depending on the amount of resources and availability of the city major to organize them. The Aviation Unit is not involved at all in CIMIC activities, being under the leadership of the mission and not of Chilean authorities. The engineer company is actively involved in CIMIC activities in Port-au-Prince. This company is also under the leadership of MINUSTAH and is independent from CHIBATT.

Chile and SGBV

In regard to SGBV, none of the Chilean personnel in Port-au-Prince complies with functions that would put them in contact with cases, although the CIMIC officer (from Ecuador) from the Chilean-Ecuadorian Engineer Company is well aware of the high number of cases in Haiti. The personnel from the CHIBATT, however, said that they have not encountered many cases in that region. Different from other contingents they haven't mentioned the dissuasion power its military presence might

have, nor CIMIC activities that may benefit local women. It is also important to mention that CHIBATT had 7 women serving, all of them fulfilling support functions.

Chile is currently implementing an Action Plan following UN's resolution 1325 in regard to women peace and security amongst its police and armed forces. Analyzing the role of Chilean women in peace operations and its impact on SGVB is a fertile field of research and should be explored in the near future.

> Uruguay

Uruguay's peacekeepers have been in Haiti since the beginning of the mission in 2004 and have the second largest contingent in MINUSTAH. Currently there are 1109 troops, divided in 2 battalions, URUBATTI and URUBATTII and a Navy company, URUMAR. The Uruguayan personnel is scattered in different places of Haiti and thus each of its unit has confronted different challenges.

URUMAR, for example, has personnel in 4 different cities: Gonaïves, Fort Liberté, Jacmel and Port Salut. They are responsible for maritime patrols and own all the vehicles used. The largest amounts of URUMAR troops are in Port Salut in the south of the country. The most serious problem confronted in that area refers to drug trafficking; 30% of their actions are coordinated with Haitian authorities from the HNP and Haitian Cost Guard, while 50% is done with UNPol, indicating an important joint effort in the region.

Another URUMAR detachment is located at Fort Liberté. There, 38 troops help Haitian authorities in the control of the northern border with Dominican Republic. The most common incidents reported by patrols relate to illegal trafficking throughout the border which includes child and women trafficking. These operations are also coordinated with the local HNP and Haitian Cost Guard as that is the

only way they are able to detain criminals in custody.

Uruguayan battalions I and II present considerable differences in their organization. While URUBATT I is scattered in three cities in the South – Miragones, Jeremy and Les Cayes -, URUBATT II has a big base widely known as “The farm” in which all of its personnel is based. In the later case as they are responsible for supervising 70 Km of a very permeable border between Dominican Republic and Haiti they have detachments that stay in the area for a couple of days patrolling and then return to the base.

Besides the organizations differences, URUBATT II seems to be more rigidly organized, the regional differences incur considerable differences in regards to the challenges confronted. While the area of URUBATT I is closer to the cost and more politicized having small urban centers (it also has a special anti riot unit composed of 30 men), the area covered by URUBATT II is a rural one comprised of small villages and a border area. The most common incidents confronted by URUBATT I relate to political disturbances and drug trafficking, URUBATT II on its part has important challenges in regard to the border with Dominican Republic, the deportees that are sent back to Haiti, illegal movement of people and tumults. . An important feature to underline in regard to Uruguayan personnel in general is the vast experience in peace operations. Most of them have participated in peace missions before (some for the third, fourth and even fifth time), sometimes even in the same battalion incurring in a different way to deal with the problems. The interviews performed with URUBATT II personnel indicated that 70% had participated in previous missions and as many of them had been deployed in the same battalion they learned the language and knew the people. It was said that Haitian population sometimes look for specific soldiers that had been in pre-

vious years and if they are deployed they go after them to greet.

Another important feature of Uruguayan contingent is that many of them have been in the Congo prior to working in Haiti. As its well-known the mission in Congo comprises a completely different security environment, which is said to be considerably more dangerous. All Uruguayan troops interviewed that had been in Congo relate the mission with great enthusiasm and seem to be extremely frustrated with the Haitian mission in which they seem not to fit in as soldiers but as relief workers.

In both Uruguayan battalions CIMIC activities receive a special place, but especially in the northern one. They have a fixed weekly schedule and everyday they distribute food and water, in small villages, orphanages and schools. They also provide medical attention and lectures about personal hygiene, amongst others. It seemed almost contradictory that being in a border area, CIMIC activities seem to be more important than activities aimed at maintaining a safe environment.

As a matter of fact, Uruguayan soldiers affirmed in almost all interviews that they have no knowledge of SGBV cases whatsoever. It is also worth mentioning that in the case of URUBATT II despite the constant affirmations in regard the absence of SGBV they cited a local organization that treat women victims of SGBV and abandoned children, which seemed contradictory. An important analysis would be the assessment of SGBV cases in the area to contrast with military position.

Uruguay and SGBV

Although Uruguayan troops haven't reported SGBV cases, it was noted that they were one of the few countries which submitted the gender reports to MINUSTAH's CIMIC Center and have an important number of women in its battalion and units.

The gender reports were submitted by URUBATT I in September 2010 and May 2011 and indicate that food, water and medical attention were provided for several girls and women. As in the other countries case, there isn't a continuity in these reports and thus its impact in empowering women cannot be assessed.

Another important feature to be underlined in regard to Uruguay is the incorporation of women in its armed forces. Although recent¹¹, women can join combat arms within all Uruguayan Armed forces. Although most of the interviewed women perform activities within the base, some have close contact with the population through CIMIC activities. It was said that they call attention and population get closer to them.

However, a recent case of an alleged sexual abuse by Uruguayan troops against a Haitian young boy in Port Salut has put the efforts of Uruguayan troops in jeopardy. A movie which has been circulating in the internet since the beginning of September shows a Haitian boy lying on the floor with arms tied and five Marines surrounding him. The Marines were accused of having humiliated and violated the boy, however, the ongoing investigation (as of October 1st, 2011) has not verified yet if the rape took place, even it is clear that serious violations of UN norm occurred as a local was brought inside the military base.

While the population has manifested against the presence of Uruguayan and international troops in general since the event, the Uruguayan government has acted fast, the marines were repatriated and are currently confronting an investigation process. Although one cannot ignore the facts, I would like to draw attention to yet another element, and that related to the controversy that resulted from the video images and the resultant negative effect it had not

only on Uruguayan troops but also on MINUSTAH in general.

For the debate of SGBV and how troops can contribute to addressing it, the case has added to those that claim that the peacekeepers instead of helping are part of the problem and the population would be better off without them. This case has led many to question the "Uruguayan way" of doing peacekeeping that is, having closer contact with the population which is also said to be one of the main features of success. As a matter of fact, many would refer to the "Latin American way" of peacekeeping as that related to a closer contact with the population that would not incur in a sexual contact but one in which trustful relations could be built.

Whether the marines have abused and violated the young Haitian boy or not is not clear, however it is clear the consequences of this highly publicized event will have lasting consequences for Uruguayan and other peacekeeping forces of the UN.

Conclusions and recommendations

MINUSTAH's military component is considered the most reliable of the security forces that are currently deployed in Haiti, including the UN police and the Haitian Police. However, in regard to UN's gender policies it is the component that is least involved with activities that may enhance the empowerment of women and decrease its vulnerable status.

Although it is true that the military component for the characteristics of its function is expected to be less involved with these kind of activities, it was verified that a series of policies and guidelines are simply ignored or unknown for most of interviewees, indicating that there might also be a problem in the enforcement of UN's gender policies. As a matter of fact with the exception of the Argentine battalion, no other battalion was aware of the

¹¹ Women were allowed to join the Air Force as commissioned officers in 1997 and the first graduation occurred in 2002. The Navy also first accepted the participation of women in 1997, having the first graduation in 2001. Finally the Army allowed women to be part of that force in 1999 and had its first graduation in 2003.

existence of a position entitled, “gender focal point”, for each one of the battalions and most of them did not have a designated officer complying with the functions according to the UN Gender Peacekeeping Guidelines. There isn’t yet a policy to enforce countries to designate a military focal point, nor there are initiatives to promote coordinated actions amongst them. In fact, the only country that has a military focal point, Argentina, has because it is an initiative of its Ministry of Defense.

Due to the characteristics of the peace mission in Haiti and its serious humanitarian condition, the military has encompassed some humanitarian functions including the implementation of Quick Impact Projects that not only supports Violence Reduction programs but also promotes a sustainable development. It’s within this prism that the military could be most helpful in the empowerment of women. As the military are usually seen as a more reliable force in comparison to the police it could have a better impact in Haitian society. Some of the projects that are already taking place through the leadership of the military component could be more focused on benefiting women and improving its status in Haitian society.

Finally in regard to its main protection function, the military has accomplished its goal of improving the overall security conditions in Haiti. Also it has accomplished the goal of improving the security within some particularly unsafe places, such as some of the capital’s neighborhoods and the IDP camps. However, no action directed towards promoting a safer environment for women and young girls specifically were advanced.

In regard to the UN gender strategy:

1. The UN’s policy in regard to promoting gender balance within the military is clear. However, challenges ahead are various. Although some of the interviewed battalions have promoted an increased participation of military women in peacekeeping operations, women are not in the first line and thus do not participate in activities such as patrols and checkpoints that have more contact with the population. Usually, also due to their functions, they are confined to the base. One explanation is the fact that the incorporation of women in combat arms is still very recent in Latin America and that is why not so many of them are deployed. Also due to the fact that unfortunately it is still the case that in some countries women have not made it to these arms and thus no women in such capacities can be sent to peace operations. In any case, the number of military women on the field either inside or outside the military base in Haiti is way behind the ideal and there is no active policy currently being implemented to change this reality.
2. There is no current plan or program designed to improve military response to SGBV cases. Moreover, it seems that individual soldiers respond to cases in different ways showing that there is knowledge in regard to UN Peacekeeping Gender guidelines, and a limited training in the area.
3. The military component, due to its own functions, is not currently involved in improving the conditions of Haitian institutions capabilities to respond to SGBV. However, if a Haitian Army is to be created as President Martelly has announced, the first step will be evaluate what is the role that MINUSTAH would play on this regard, and in the case of be implicated in this process, analyze if the UN components would be involved in their training. That clearly will represent a complex and a new assignment for the current UN mission.

The following are recommendations for improving military action in SGBV:

- Increase the coordination to promote sharing information on SGBV cases amongst all mission components (military, police and civilian) and civil society organizations, local and international ones.
- Promote better and longer pre-deployment and induction trainings that include not only SEA but also SGBV in the local population and the role of military component in protecting women and girls.
- Promote patrols and activities that aim to provide more security to women in dangerous areas.
- Promote CIMIC activities, QIPs and CVR projects that aim to benefit and empower women.
- Promote increased participation of military women in patrols and CIMIC activities in which they would have more contact with the population, supporting the approximation of women and possibly increasing denounces of SGBV cases and improving its treatment.

The last point refers to the delicate issue of cases of sexual abuses of the troops. As it was mentioned there are several reported cases in which UN blue helmets are accused of abusing minors, contributing to prostitution and even raping local women. Although UN policy of zero tolerance is widely approached in the trainings, it lacks a serious monitoring entity to ensure that UN policy is followed including the unspoken issue of the use of prostitution linked to peace operations.

The Police Component

MINUSTAH's police component has the primary function of mentoring and monitoring the Haitian Police, who has the executive mandate. It is formed by the Formed Police Units (FPU) and the UNPol. Most of them come from African and Asian countries, although Canada also has an important number of police officers on the field. As of June 28th, MINUSTAH counted with a total of 3,546 police officer, being 3,241 men and 305 women, comprising 8.6% of the total¹².

While the UNPol officers work independently and in accordance to MINUSTAH's need, the FPUs work and live together similar to a military contingent; they have their own bases and are deployed together. The UNPol officers are spread along Haitian territory, they usually live in hotels or rented houses and apartments; also they don't work with their compatriots but with different counterparts that were appointed by MINUSTAH.

Most of the work to be done in Haiti refers to policing work and plans to withdraw military troops are starting to be discussed. However, member countries contributing to the police component are very limited and insufficient particularly when compared to military contributions. Because their presence is limited and despite the considerable differences between military and police personnel, by the end of the day, it is the military that end up complying with some of the police functions. Some activities are performed as joint operations in which the UN police, the HNP and the military work together. Many of the foot and vehicle patrols are also joint tasks, as due to the military mandate, some activities as imprisoning criminals can only be performed by the police.

The UNPol

The UNPol is currently composed by 1,251

¹² Data obtained at MINUSTAH's Information Center on June 29th, 2010.

police officers, of those 119 are women, comprising around 10.5% of the whole UNPol personnel, but still behind the 20% goal launched by the UN.¹³ The police component's main challenge is the lack of personnel, differentiated training and the language barrier. Because MINUSTAH requires either French or English as language requirements there are those who speak English, those that speak French and those that really don't speak anything making communication very difficult.

Despite the limited induction training received when the police officers arrive in the mission, their background and previous training differs considerably. Some countries do not have specialized training for police officers to be deployed in peace operations, while those that do have may receive differentiated training. Particularly, in regard to gender perspectives, that leads to a major problem regarding the standardization of procedures and approaches as cultural differences amongst UNPol personnel lead to differentiated way of dealing with SGBV cases.

To this one should add the fact that UN's police is a civilian police, however several countries send militarized police, like Brazil or Guatemala. These police officers have military rank and are used to hierarchies. On the field, however, ranks do not exist, and as it happens sometimes the head of a police station has a lower military rank than its subordinate, leading to personal frustration and other practical problem. In an anonymous interview, two UNPol officers poured out *"Not only rank is ignored, your previous experience and background as well. In the end you end up with a high experienced Colonel working on a database sitting on a desk the whole day and an inexperienced police officer as head of a police station. It is all about politics."*

Several UNPol, particularly Canadians, working at UN headquarter in Haiti were interviewed. However due to the focus of this re-

search some Brazilian and Argentine police officers were also interviewed as well as a group of 6 Norwegian officers who are implementing a specific project about SGBV in Haiti.

The Canadians occupy important positions within the Police component. From all interviewed they seemed to be the ones most aware of the SGBV problem in Haiti. They also cumulate extensive experience with SGBV cases due to the functions they perform in their home country. The Norwegian officers on their part confronted several challenges to implement the project they were appointed to. Specifically, this project envisions first to professionalize the HNP in the prevention and eradication of SGBV and second to promote gender mainstreaming policies.

The tasks and work performed by each individual UNPol differs considerably. Depending on their position they would have more or less contact with SGBV cases. The IDP camps represent major challenges for police work and specifically regarding SGBV (since the earthquake in January 2010 millions were displaced and still live in IDP camps, in fact 2 million Inhabitants were forced to abandon their homes.¹⁴ Some IDP camps in Haiti are gigantic with more than 50,000 people). The increasing insecurity led to the creation of a UNPol IDP Unit to organize projects as well as organize police patrolling and HNP training within the camps. There are currently 200 permanent UNPol units in the camps.

These interviews have once again emphasized the "cultural stigma", corresponding to the cultural characteristics and family structure of Haitian society favors the recurrence of SGBV. Specifically, the necessity of raising awareness amongst Haitian women regarding SGBV and the need to denounce cases is highlighted. In order to do so, an upcoming project

¹⁴ International Amnesty, "Aftershocks: Women speak out against sexual violence in Haiti's camps", January 6th, 2011. Available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/haiti-sexual-violence-against-women-increasing-2011-01-06>. Access: 10/01/2011.

¹³ Ibid

will focus on improving gender training and increasing the gender unit presence within the camps, so that a closer approximation and collaboration with the Haitian women is enhanced.

Bangladesh's female FPU

The creation of entire FPUs with only women police officers has been the most impressive breakthroughs since the UN has started urging states to increase the number of women amongst military and police troops. The first female FPU was sent by India in 2006 to serve in Liberia¹⁵. At that time, the initiative was hailed by the UN and interpreted as a powerful message to contributing countries.

Since 2006, another country has joined India in making history within the UN's gender balance objective. In June 2010, Bangladesh's first all-women FPU arrived in the quake-ravaged country of Haiti¹⁶. The initiative was more than welcomed not only because it is an important push towards UN goal of achieving the 20% of women personnel by 2014, but also because Bangladesh was the first Muslim country to send a whole unit of women to serve on their own in a post disaster zone to ensure peace and support reconstruction efforts.

At the moment the Bangladesh's contribution with FPU to MINUSTAH rise to a total of 479 police personnel, being 356 men and 123 women (Female Formed Police Unit).¹⁷

The presence of uniformed women has served as a vital example of women's empowerment for the local population. Being half of the population composed of women, the presence of female officers reinforce the idea of women

being an important part of a well-functioning society. Moreover, besides the well-known argument of supporting the approximation between the UN and the population, it is also emphasized that increasing the number of women peacekeeper has an important practical result in dealing with SGBV. First, it can enhance reporting by facilitating the contact between local woman and women peacekeeper, and second it creates a deterrent effect against male peacekeepers sex-related misconduct.

In an interview with the first Bangladesh female FPU only one week before their departure it was learned that in fact, the unit was formed by female police officers from different backgrounds and specialties, also coming from different regions. The officers themselves informed our research team that it is an enormous challenge to work as a unit when originally they didn't even know each other and have complete different experiences.

Originally, the FPUs were conceived as a backup and support the UN Police component that is lightly armed. Before being deployed, MINUSTAH's spokesperson Fred Blaise said Bangladesh's female FPU would work within one of the IDP camps and being responsible for crowd control, disturbances and other regular duties, as their male counterparts. However, several of the interviewed UN personnel, both military and civilian, including the Police Commissioner have said that since they arrived, their functions were limited to guarding UN facilities, having thus very limited contact with the population. Over time, though, they started to leave their base more frequently, including patrolling the IDP camps. It was surprising to verify that there is a consensus amongst MINUSTAH's community regarding the limited use of Bangladesh's female FPU.

The visit to their base was one of the most interesting and allowed us to see at first-hand how culture influences the way female police personnel works. They received us with a

15 UN News Center, *UN hails decision by India to send 125 female police officer for peacekeeping*, 2006. Available at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=19696&Cr=Liberia&Cr1> . Access: 08/20/2011.

16 Razzak Razza, "Bangladesh police in Haiti", *Blitz*, May, 26th, 2010. Available at: <http://www.weeklyblitz.net/755/bangladesh-police-in-haiti> . Access: 08/20/2011.

17 Available on: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2011/oct11_5.pdf. Access: 12/01/2011

friendly and openly manners and shared with us their vision regarding the challenges to address SGBV situations and encourage local women within a country in which there was a lack of values and absent family structure.

A female commander leads the whole female FPU and she is also the one in charge of the disciplinary aspects. The contact with the local population is a matter of evaluation as well, not only regarding assistance actions but also on regard on the internal discipline related with leisure outside the base.

Most of them are mothers of little children, recognizing, several times, that the support of their families back home is vital in order to let them do their duty with their mind calm. However, they feel awful with the impossibility of helping the Haitian children they see in front of the Bangladeshi base.

UN Police and SGBV

In spite of the growing problems confronted by UN's police component, it is noteworthy, that contrary to what was verified amongst some of the military contingents, police officers recognize the existence of SGBV in Haiti and experience daily cases. For that reason, there is an UNPol Gender Adviser and a Gender Adviser for the Police IDP Camps Unit. The later was created after the problem of widespread sexual violations in IDP camps was made public by some civil society organizations, such as the International Amnesty and Madres. It was said that security conditions, such as lack

of light and limited policing facilitates the perpetration of SGBV crimes.

Because the UNPol does not have an executive mandate, but a mentoring and monitoring one, police officers use to believe their role is very limited as HNP is supposed to have the mandate to actually act. This interpretation leads to a malfunctioning of the public security system in Haiti.

UNPol has realized this problem and is launching a new plan of action in which the mentoring mandate is explained as supporting the role of HNP, but also forcing them to do what they are supposed to do, showing how things should be done. In that way, HNP would model the UNPol and copy procedures increasing its professionalization and capacity to work.

HNP's capacity to address SGBV is very limited. Currently there is a new project implemented by the American Embassy that aims to train 50 HNP female officers in gender issues. That is indeed a pressing need. There is only one police station in the whole Haiti specialized in gender located within one of the Brazilian military bases, with 11

officers trained in gender issues. They do not have enough facilities to properly attend the victims and capabilities to follow up on cases; victims use to come to them because in fact they look for medical treatment with the Brazilian military.

HNP's challenges in addressing SGBV is not limited to the training and lack of personnel. There isn't police officers trained in forensics that could provide victims with the proof or evi-

"I was in the police station at the IDP camp when a mother comes in holding her two-year-old daughter. She seems desperate and says that her 15-year-old cousin had raped the little girl. The mother told us that she surprised the naked boy on top of the baby girl and that he left running when she arrived. In the meanwhile, the boy's family comes in and bring the boy, as when the population heard about the crime surrounded their house and wanted to take justice in their own hands. To protect the boy the family turned him in. Then, there was this bizarre view in which the victim's mother, the victim, the perpetrator and his family were all together in this little room, while the crowd was still outside the police station. There was sperm on the little girl's tummy so we took her to the MSF hospital. There they said that luckily she hasn't been violated, but was sexually abused. When things like that happen, you feel complete despair. How come? A two-year-old baby girl..."

(UNPol stationed at an IDP camp in Haiti)

dence of SGBV cases. This is a problem UNPol is trying to solve and currently a program of forensic training is being implemented within the Haitian police.

Due to the critical reporting problem, there is also an ongoing initiative to create a SGBV database that standardize the reporting system and share information with the whole UN system within MINUSTAH. It is an important initiative and it will allow the establishment of patterns of SGBV cases in different places throughout time.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The daily police work leads to a closer contact with the population and an increased awareness regarding the existence of SGBV cases in Haiti. Police officers in general are aware of the situation and have an adequate view of the problem. However, as in the case of the military contingent, their mandate was considered by almost all interviewed as a serious obstacle to properly addressing SGBV.

The way UN's police component is organized also means additional challenges: different cultures are reflected in the way SGBV is understood and the different forms of approaching and dealing with the problem. Moreover, different from the military contingents, the police component tends to work in environments that are culturally mixed, increasing the trans-cultural clashes amongst police officers and hampering a joint work.

In regard to the UN's four basic strategic goals to enhance its actions in the treatment of SGBV, the UN police:

1. Due to its main functions, the police is not involved with activities to enhance the presence of Haitian women in the political, economical and social life of Haitian society. However, due to the UNPol's role in training and mentoring the HNP action to include more Haitian women in its national police could be enhanced by the UN police.
2. MINUSTAH's police component has shown important improvement in regard to gender balance. Although it still lacks female personnel in primary lines of actions, presence of women in the police component is significantly higher than in the military. However, the percentage of police women in MINUSTAH is still behind the 10% goal.
3. MINUSTAH is doing reasonably well in regard to improving its own police capabilities to better respond SGBV cases. Not only new gender sensitive SOPs have just been launched, but field training aiming to reinforce awareness and response capabilities are thought to be established. Moreover, it is important to notice that despite the current poor infra-structure and conditions to receive victims of SGBV in police stations, the UNPol, aware of its debilities, is attempting to improve response, by increasing the number of gender specialized units to improve presence on the field, particularly within IDP camps where the security situation poses the biggest challenges.
4. Interviews have shown that police officers in general have not properly understood UN's police mandate and place it as an obstacle to improve Haiti's security situation. The same is true in regard to SGBV. The practical meaning of mentoring and monitoring should be clarified so that police officers would actively promote a HNP better response in training and in daily activities rather than blaming it for lack of response. Moreover, police officers should be encouraged to follow SGBV cases, to make sure that justice has been sought by victims, only this way the injustice cycle is broken and victim's rehabilitation can take place.

THE CIVIL SOCIETY

Analyzing the work of international actors and MINUSTAH in particular in regard to SGBV in Haiti cannot exclude civil society as an important player in the field. The interviews with some of the countless civil

impartial status have led them to isolate themselves, sometimes even avoiding coordinate actions with other civil society organizations that can be anyhow related to MINUSTAH. The lack of coordination is one of the leading problems in Haiti, which promotes activities that may end in the duplication of resources and low information sharing. Another identified problem is the lack of interaction with Haitian community and local groups which would allow a better assessment of the population's most pressing needs.

The character of the interviewed NGOs was diverse, varying from independent and isolated NGOs such as AVSI, to those that work closely together with the military on several grounds, such as World Vision and the Brazilian NGO Viva Rio. Others are in between this spectrum, such as Doctors without Borders (MSF), which despite being completely unrelated to MINUSTAH, maintain coordinated actions with other civil society organizations and have more than once provided services for victims brought by MINUSTAH's components. Along the same lines is the Red Cross who disassociates its actions from any of those implemented by MINUSTAH; however it coordinates its actions with other UN agencies and NGOs, attempting to avoid duplication of efforts.

Of all international NGO interviewed, MSF and the Red Cross were the most organized ones with different locations all over Haiti intended to better attend the community. Particularly in regard to MSF they provide free medical services in different neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince as well as in other Haitian cities, including in some red zones, considered dangerous by the military. When asked about their security the response was *"We provide service for the community and it is their interest that we stay unharmed so we can perform our job. However if the security situation becomes extreme, then we have to leave. It happened before, but the good part is that the community attempts to improve the security of the zone*

*so we can come back. They want us there."*¹⁸

MSF provides medical services to whom-ever searches for it, independent of the character of the victim, whether it is a gang member or innocent Haitian civilians. That is the base of their neutrality and impartiality status and what ultimately contribute to their personnel and facilities security. It is forbidden to enter any MSF facility with any type of arms or security agents.

On the other hand, other organizations such as Avocats sans Frontières (ASF) work with private security agents to provide their own security. In fact, private security is a growing business in Haiti and it is widely used by several NGOs on the ground. Others request MINUSTAH's protection, and the police and military are sent out to escort some particular activity or even to protect the organization's facilities, as World Vision has done several times.

However, there are still those that work in cooperation with the military and develop joint activities as a ways to better attend the local population. One of these organizations is the Brazilian NGO Viva Rio, whose activities resemble those implemented in Brazilian slums. Viva Rio has brought the community development approach implemented in the slums of Rio and adapted to the poor and peacekeeping reality of Haiti and since 2004 it has been trying to replicate the positive results.

Its main areas of action and expertise are that of reducing armed violence through social and cultural activities, such as the hip hop and capoeira groups that target young people, as well as the empowerment of women and youth groups. The NGO is established in a orange zone, that not so long ago was considered by MINUSTAH's official as a red one and has accomplished peace agreement between rival groups through conflict mediation. Besides the mentioned activities, Viva Rio also has a func-

¹⁸ Excerpt obtained from an interview with a MSF representative on June, 26th, 2011.

tioning school and a clinic with a pilot project in the treatment of cholera.

Nonetheless it is surprising to note the level of integration it has achieved with the Brazilian military component which is located in the same area. In fact, the NGO takes advantage of the military expertise, and had several young Haitians trained by the Brazilian battalions in first aid response in case of disasters as well as in conflict mediation. The battalions, on their part, develop several social projects with the NGOs, such as the Clean Block project, amongst others, and the partnership is considered to have an important impact in the social and security status of the targeted neighborhood.

Civil Society and SGBV

The several reports regarding the reality of Haitian women, has placed the issue as a top priority for grants. While some would think that there is an exaggeration and that SGBV is an external issue that has been exported to Haiti, others firmly reaffirm the inferior status of women in Haitian society, one that ends up being reflected in the recurrence of GBV particularly within the family structure.

It is definitely true that most NGOs were emphatic in condemning women's conditions and the situation of violence they are confront in Haiti. However, there are some important differences in regard to what they consider the nature of the problem and how they approach the issue.

In 2010, the International Amnesty in partnership with Madres released a report "*Aftershocks: Women speak out against sexual violence in Haiti's camps*"¹⁹ which emphasized the vulnerable condition of women within IDP camps, going even so far as calling the situation of rape as an epidemic. The report also contained important sensible data that showed

how the number of reported rape cases had increased dramatically after the earthquake. As discussed earlier, data regarding SGBV is generally considered a problematic one, not only because each organization has its own way of reporting (having thus different conceptual framework to define what is SGBV), but also because the increase in reported cases does not necessarily mean there has been an increase in the number of cases.

That is the position adopted by almost all organizations that were interviewed. MSF in particular was emphatic, arguing that publishing SGBV data is controversial as it makes official a number that may not be actual, leading to misinterpretations.

MSF basically deals with the medical treatment and psychological follow-up of victims. The treatment is of course free and some of its medical centers are specifically established to treat victims of all types of GBV. Most organizations though are dedicated to advocacy as a ways of calling attention to the GBV problem, such as many of the several Haitian organizations dedicated to the matter, such as SOFA, KAYFAMN and MOUPHED. These organizations are also engaged in accompanying victims to medical centers where they can get a medical certificate verifying they have been abused as well as to police station so that they can seek justice.

However, it is not that easy. Concertation Nationale (a platform formed by NGOs, UN agencies and Haitian Ministries) have emphasized that the main challenge is to break the injustice cycle. In order to be able to seek justice, women need to go to specialized medical center that are able to provide them with the certificate that attest they have been abused or violated. The main problem is that there aren't many of these centers, consequently women end up not pursuing justice due to long distance and lack of transportation to centers or even due to financial reasons as some of these

19 International Amnesty, "Aftershocks: Women speak out against sexual violence in Haiti's camps", January 6th, 2011. Available at: [Http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/haiti-sexual-violence-against-women-increasing-2011-01-06](http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/haiti-sexual-violence-against-women-increasing-2011-01-06) . Access: 10/01/2011.

centers end up charging for the service.

Even if they do manage to obtain the certificate they will have a hard time filing a formal complaint on the aggressor as the Haitian police is under-prepared in terms of both personnel capability, in addition to the insufficient structures and facilities available for prosecuting criminals. The Justice system is also fragile and in many cases, financial arrangements are settled instead of using legal justice, which may not be the best solution for victims.

ASF has been working on this latter issue. Although they have only recently started dealing with SGVB victims, they perform an important job in improving Haiti's Justice system and providing legal defense lawyers for free. We were informed that it was only recently that they started dealing with victims, as previously they mostly dealt with the perpetrators. The reason is a paradoxical one: once women do manage to file formal complaints, it is possible that the perpetrator becomes a victim of the system, being thrown in prisons without judgment or minimum humane conditions.

As it can be observed from the few examples above, the NGO world is a varied one, ranging from those dedicated to taking victims to medical centers to those that perform an important advocacy job to advance women's rights in Haiti. However, clashes and divergences amongst these organizations were also observed, which impairs any attempt for joint action.

These divergences are mainly the result of a competing agenda and thus competing resources. Consequently some organizations end up playing against one another in their search for funds. That is a normal consequence of the current fund-raising scenario that most NGOs are subjected to. However, as briefly described, they also disagree in some conceptual instances such as the nature of the SGVB problem in Haiti

and the reporting system, amongst others.

There is another important difference though, noted particularly amongst Haitian organizations and those strongly firm on neutrality and impartiality principles. These organizations tend to put MINUSTAH, particularly the thousands of men from the military and police components, as part of the problem. Many organizations claim that peacekeepers tend to maintain sexual contact with local women; many of them are underage and provide sex in exchange for food or money. There are also those that have allegedly reported violations committed by peacekeepers against the local population.

It is certainly true that there are a number of cases in which peacekeepers have crossed the lines and abused, violated or perpetuated prostitution practices with locals. These are hideous acts and ought to be firmly condemned. However, it is also necessary to carefully examine the facts and separate those that have abused their peacekeeper status from those that have offered their support to reconstruct the country. In the current situation and on the heat of the debate it is hard to disagree with the horrific nature of these acts, however, one ought also to keep in mind a strategic framework of all involved actors and consider who might be benefiting from negative reputation that such accusations cause for the image and work of the UN.

These later paragraphs do not intend to free or defend peacekeepers from the hideous acts that some of them have committed but to add critical and constructive thought to the analysis of the complicated issue of sexual gender based violence and other types of violence committed against the local population. One conclusion is certain, that a more careful selection process and training procedure is essential for peacekeepers.

CONCLUSION

This report has not only attempted to show how different actors on the field deal with sexual violence, but also how they relate with each other to promote coordinated actions on the field. In light of the UN's new focus on gender, peace and security, most of the interviewees, particularly within MINUSTAH, are still behind in achieving these goals, and few coordinated actions have taken place up to now. However, despite the availability of the UN's gender policies and limited training in gender and SGBV for the security and military forces, there is a lack of pro-active policies coming from the UN to enforce its policies and guarantee minimum standards, particularly for the police and military components. It was interesting to come to the conclusion that beyond analyzing the work done by the military component in regard to SGVB, the RESDAL research mission served another end- that of increasing awareness of SGBV and gender approaches in a peace operation.

It is hard to identify who the culprit may be. The UN, as an international organization, depends on the member countries to be able to accomplish its goals. In the current scenario - in which more than 98,000 uniformed personnel are deployed throughout 16 different peace-

keeping operations - the UN is still in need of extra resources²⁰. In most cases, member country contributions do not reach the approved budget and military strength, posing yet another challenge to the enforcement of minimum standards.

Despite these shortcomings, a lot has been accomplished. Since 2000, the organization has approved a series of resolutions that attempt to promote gender balance in intervening and intervened societies and to implement measures to improve the UN's capacity to address women and girls vulnerability in order to respond to sexual violence in conflict and post conflict situations. Guidelines, workshops and limited training are also provided; furthermore, a new UN agency dedicated to the matter was created to address these issues. UN-Women is a brand-new UN invention and despite the current urge for more financial resources, the agency is centralizing all gender issues and attempting to promote transversal gender approaches in different areas.

Nonetheless, centralizing efforts should not result in independent actions. The fact of the matter is that a number of organizations on the

²⁰ Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml>. Access on: 10/01/2011

field, being part of the UN or not, fight over scarce resources leading to competitive patterns of behavior that undermine joint and coordinated actions. In the absence of coordination, one holistic approach cannot be implemented and resources are wasted.

There is still a need for a top-down initiative that would combine all UN efforts including the military, the police and the civilian component. While the military and the police lack adequate training in gender and further clarification regarding their mandates, the civilians ought to have a more centralized agenda, possibly in the hands of the high-rank civilians as a way to better coordinate actions and promote more holistic approaches.

The same is true for civil society organizations. Although it is not possible to interfere in what all of them have been doing, an assessment of their areas of responsibility and main actions should be made available and constantly updated.

In places like Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo and others contexts characterized by conflict or post conflict situations, challenges seem

to surpass accomplishments and often the international community finds itself at a crossroads. While millions of dollars have not managed to improve the overall situation, there is a real risk of aid dependency, while the government is still weak and the population develops growing anti sentiment and requests foreigners to leave.

It is in these kinds of situations that sexual violence and other forms of gender based violence take its worst form. It is perpetuated by a system of impunity and on a limited cultural consideration that is used as a justification for these hideous acts, seen as normal in certain societies. A key problem is that many of those actors responsible for addressing, preventing and responding to SGBV end up accepting this argument that is at odds with the average human being's sense of morality.

Consequently, not only must actions be designed to promote women's empowerment and increase their security. There is also a need to raise awareness regarding culture, gender and sexual violence, so that the boundaries between them are drawn and culture is not used to justify inefficient policies and lack of concern.

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