



ROLE OF WOMEN IN UN PEACEKEEPING

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UN Peacekeeping is an important arm of the United Nations system and one of its most successful flagship activities. In order to maintain a gender balance, women peacekeepers are becoming an important part of UN peacekeeping operations in conflict areas.

In the year 1993, women only constituted one per cent of deployed uniformed personnel. By the year 2014, out of roughly 125,000 peacekeepers, women constituted three per cent of military personnel and ten per cent of police personnel in UN peacekeeping missions around the world.¹ Although the United Nations encourages the participation of women in UN peacekeeping missions, a lot also depends on member states in this regard and whether they encourage women deployment or not. The UN Police Division launched the “Global Effort” to recruit more women in the national police service and also into the UN police operations across the globe.

Currently, some 8000 women are currently deployed in 14 peacekeeping missions across the world out of which more than half are wearing the police and military uniform. Just as the United Nations aims to achieve gender parity by the year 2030, women represent less than 5 per cent of the total uniformed personnel within the peacekeeping missions.² The presence of women peacekeepers has a very important impact on the local environment as they are instrumental in identifying the

¹ Women in Peacekeeping, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping>

² Bintou Keita, Women in Peacekeeping: An operational imperative, October 14, 2018, <https://medium.com/unpeacekeeping/women-in-peacekeeping-an-operational-imperative-24d4e9a86250>

problems faced by the local population of women and help improve access for local women and youth as well.

According to recent statistics, the female blue berets are mostly from the African continent and coming from mainly Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, Rwanda or South Africa.³ This also reveals a lot about how different states approach gender balanced peacekeeping. In 2018, out of 4353 uniformed women in the peacekeeping endeavors, Africa contributed 65 per cent which shows that Africa is ahead of other member states when it comes to women participation in peacekeeping. In order to encourage female deployment and participation, the UN has introduced targets which require that member states must deploy women comprising at least 15 per cent of the military observers and staff officer positions.

It is established that violent conflict disproportionately affects women; therefore the presence of women in UN peacekeeping missions can go a long way in ensuring that host communities benefit from the impact of female participation. Women help build trust with host communities and are more likely to de-escalate tensions and help in restoring peace. Therefore, it is imperative to have women participation in the United Nations most visible activity - the UN peacekeeping force. It can be said that the incorporation of women as elements of UN peacekeeping forces has been an extremely slow moving process. In the 32-year period between 1957 - the first time that a woman officially served in a UN peacekeeping mission - and until 1989, a mere 20 women served as uniformed peacekeepers. Beginning in the 1990s, peacekeeping missions began to shift away from exclusively combat-oriented roles like patrolling and increasingly assumed a more humanitarian capacity.⁴

The effort towards reaching gender parity across the spectrum has been the hallmark of the United Nations system and it is highly being encouraged that women participate in various fields. The presence of women peacekeepers can have a very positive impact on peacekeeping missions as it helps improve access and support for local women, as well as providing a greater access to women in the community can help conflict ridden areas achieve peace by greater involvement of women.

Pakistan has remained a steadfast contributor to UN peacekeeping missions and has also rendered sacrifices in this regard and the mention of women in peacekeeping cannot go without the mention of Pakistan's contribution in this sphere. Pakistan has met the United Nations target of deploying 15

³ Ibid.

⁴ B.D Mowell, Women in UN Peacekeeping: Historical and Contemporary Patterns, July 10, 2018, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/07/10/women-in-u-n-peacekeeping-historical-and-contemporary-patterns/>

per cent female military and staff officers in UN peacekeeping missions in order to enhance women participation as desired by the UN.

Although member states need to go further in enhancing women participation in the United Nations peacekeeping activities, it can be said that women participation has progressed significantly and continues to help the United Nations make its flagship activity more effective.