

EXPLORATORY OPTIONS ON USING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF MILITARY WOMEN IN UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

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An extremely low number of female military personnel are deployed in current peacekeeping missions. On average, **only 3 percent of the military in UN missions are women**, and these are mostly employed as support staff.¹ This number has not changed since 2011. It has barely inched up from **1 percent in 1993**², despite repeated calls for more women in peacekeeping since resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000.

One of the most cited reasons for this low number is that the percentage of women in the national militaries of some of the largest troop contributing countries (TCCs) is itself very low.³ For example, the top three contributing countries are Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, which have very few women in their armed forces. Conversely, many of the countries that have a higher percentage of female military personnel do not send many peacekeepers to UN missions. European and North-American countries with percentages of women in the military between 8 percent and 20 percent, typically contribute more uniformed personnel and civilian staff to NATO, EU, and OSCE missions, rather than UN missions. Countries like Zimbabwe and Belarus reach 40 percent of female representation, but out of only 85 and 5 troops respectively.⁴ There are notable exceptions to this trend: Ethiopia (4th largest contributor, 7 percent of female representation), Ghana (7th largest, 10 percent), Nigeria (8th largest, 7 percent), Tanzania (11th largest, 6.6 percent), South Africa (14th largest, 15 percent), and Uruguay (18th largest, 7.5 percent) all exceed the global average significantly and deploy significant numbers of peacekeepers.

Depending on the country and the category of personnel, individuals may apply for peacekeeping positions or be selected by their superiors without undergoing an application process. **Even for specialized positions, where potential recruits apply or are individually selected, like UN Military Experts in missions, there are currently only 65 women out of a total of 1757, or 3.6 percent. This number is even lower than in 2008, 2009, and 2010.**

Women's participation in the security sector has been recognized as a **critical component of mission success**, both in the UN normative frameworks on peacekeeping and Women, Peace and Security, as well as by commanders on the ground themselves. They note that women peacekeepers broaden the range of

¹ In the UN's largest mission, MONUSCO, this percentage is even lower, only 2 percent. Many reportedly work on logistics, communications, civil-military coordination, or medical support and rarely leave the base.

² United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/womeninpk.shtml>

³ No single source contains consistent and comprehensive data on the gender forces of military forces worldwide. Most of the available data pertains to NATO countries and Latin American countries (RESDAL annual reports). However, Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley have compiled data for almost 50 TCCs using a variety of sources. The low percentage of women in the armed forces of TCCs is not the only reason offered. Often, women are not interested in peacekeeping operations if they have more advantageous career opportunities at home or do not have family support to leave for one or multiple rotations. Lack of experience with firearms and manual transmission vehicles is frequently cited as another entry barrier.

⁴ It should be noted, however, that the percentage in missions is typically lower than the percentage in national armed forces. For example, approximately 4 percent of the Indian armed forces are women, but less than 1.7 percent of their deployed troops are women. According to Karim and Beardsley (2015, forthcoming), recruiters and commanders often take safety and cultural considerations into account when making decisions about deploying women or not.

skills among the personnel, enhance the operational effectiveness of all tasks, and improve the mission's image, accessibility and credibility. Female military officers are in great demand in mixed staff protection teams, drive strong civil-military coordination, and can more effectively reach out to and interact with civilians in the host country. Targeted outreach to women in host communities is particularly needed to capitalize on their familiarity with local protection strategies, early warning on patterns of attack that affect women and girls disproportionately, the flow of small arms and light weapons, tensions in social relations and in the community, and threats to personal, family, and community security. Although military women's professional competence spans beyond these tasks and activities, commanders have identified that female military officers also have a comparative advantage in house and body searches, interacting with survivors of gender-based violence, working in women's prisons, or screening women in disarmament and demobilization sites.

Both the Secretary General and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, through the Office of the Military Advisor, have been encouraging TCCs to deploy more women. As part of the UN Global Effort launched in 2009, the UN Police Division UNPOL set out to recruit more female police officers into national police services and into UN police operations around the world. A target of 20% women police was set, to be achieved by 2014 (it currently stands at 9.4 percent).⁵ **A parallel target of 8 percent by 2014 for military officers was also set.** In reports of the Secretary-General, member states have been encouraged to deploy at least the same percentage of women as is found in their national armed forces. And the UN Security Council frequently includes language in mission authorization mandates that call for states to consider the importance of female representation in their troop contributions. These recommendations are not enforceable, and there is no mechanism in place to induce compliance.

Many member states have been taking active measures to increase women's participation in the military and in peacekeeping operations.⁶ These include: lowering the number of service years required to apply or be selected to a peacekeeping mission; targeted recruitment campaigns; removing barriers and exclusion of women from certain categories of military personnel; the use of existing female peacekeepers in communications campaigns; conducting surveys and studies on recruitment and retention of women in the armed forces; establishing networks of female recruits and potential female applicants; more nuanced and differentiated requirements for various functions and roles; changes in family policy; reforms addressing sexual harassment and abuse within the force; changes to facilities, uniforms, and equipment; and specialized training; and specialized training for female military officers, among others.⁷

In search of ways to boost women's participation in the military contingents of UN peacekeeping missions, the option of financial incentives is rarely put forth.

In UN peace operations, member states pay their uniformed personnel and the UN reimburses them at a rate established by consensus in the 5th committee. While the Security Council authorizes peace operations, determines their mandates, and specifies the maximum number of military and police personnel to be deployed, the power to approve peacekeeping expenditures rests with the General Assembly. Cost estimates are prepared by the Secretariat. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions reviews and comments before submitting the SG's proposal to the Fifth Committee and, if approved, to the General Assembly. The whole process often takes up to half a year for new missions and a full year for the regular annual budget cycle.

Largely unchanged since 1974, **the UN reimburses TCCs on a per-head, per-soldier basis, using a flat rate and a number of supplements and allowances.** This year, in 2014, **the rate was finally raised after**

⁵ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/sites/police/initiatives/globaleffort.shtml>

⁶ Examples of these can be found in the yearly national reports of NATO members to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives, or in country submissions to the Secretary-General's annual report on Women, Peace and Security.

⁷ Some of the countries that have taken the largest and most varied number of measures include Norway, Argentina, South Africa, the United States, and Australia.

remaining stagnant since 2002 at just over USD 1,000 to more than USD 1,300 a month per contingent member, based on an empirical survey⁸ of current costs and further to the recommendations of a special advisory group. The final rate was a compromise between the demands of TCCs, mostly from developing countries, and the main funders of the peacekeeping budget. Specialists and “key enablers” (engineers, medical personnel, special forces, transportation and communications) are reimbursed at a slightly higher rate.

In order to use financial incentives to encourage TCCs to recruit and deploy more women to UN missions’ military contingents, **the Secretary-General could consider two main options:**

- 1) Establishing a slightly **higher reimbursement rate for the deployment of military women than for military men**, all else being equal.
- 2) Establishing a “**gender-balance**” **premium** by which the TCC receives a reimbursement package that is, e.g. 10-25 % higher if the contingent meets certain criteria: for example, if more than 8 percent of the contingent’s effectives are military women, and a further percentage of them are staff officers, military observers, or other pre-determined functions/categories.

An analysis of both options follows:

There is great resistance to pay some countries at a higher rate than others, as it may be seen to undermine the legitimacy and the universal burden-sharing that should accompany UN peacekeeping. Moreover, military men may resent being valued less than their female counterparts. However, higher reimbursement rates per female soldier may not mean higher salaries for women, as their home countries determine their salaries and what to do with the money they receive from the UN for their troop contributions. For example, should the TCC decide to increase overall salaries to everyone because of the higher compensation from the UN, **both men and women would benefit equally**.

Secondly, in this year’s report presenting the results of the salary cost survey⁹, the countries surveyed did note that **it costs more to recruit, train and deploy female personnel**, which could be a direct justification to argue for a different reimbursement rate.¹⁰ At least one country reported that it has recently introduced an additional allowance for women to encourage them to join the armed forces. Another country reported an additional travel allowance for female troops to make it easier for them to maintain contact with their children. A number of sample countries reported on specific items of clothing provided to women and separate accommodations. Others reported additional costs due to covering women-specific health issues.

An anticipated source of resistance to such an incentivization scheme would be the perceived extra cost added to the peacekeeping budget. This is likely to be raised as a point of concern in particular by the 12 countries that provide 85 percent¹¹ of the peacekeeping budget at a time when it has ballooned up to almost 9 billion dollars. However, the additional cost would be insignificant in the coming years. To give an example: if the reimbursement rate were 10 percent higher for female military personnel, at current levels,

⁸ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/859; http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/813

⁹ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/813

¹⁰ Mainly due to specific needs and facilities for women (including maternity leaves and sanitary facilities) or upfront costs in changes to facilities or uniforms to facilitate women’s integration in the armed forces. It should be noted that this cost analysis could be argued in the opposite direction: for example, not a single female soldier has been ever accused of sexual exploitation and abuse on mission, whereas dealing with allegations of abuses committed by male soldiers may result in high unanticipated costs for those countries.

¹¹ United States (28.38%); Japan (10.83%); France (7.22%); Germany (7.14%); United Kingdom (6.68%); China (6.64%); Italy (4.45%); Russian Federation (3.15%); Canada (2.98%); Spain (2.97%) formed the top ten 2013-2015.
<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml>

reaching a 10 percent benchmark in 2020, for example, would cost an additional 13.3 million dollars, which is 0.1 percent of the overall peacekeeping budget.¹²

Another way of providing a financial incentive but slightly different than providing it per number of female troops would be by **establishing a gender-balance premium**. There is a precedent for this. In the last few years, and since the New Horizon process, there have been countless recommendations to move away from an emphasis on numbers and **concentrate on capabilities, readiness, and performance** instead. Recent recommendations from the Special Advisory Group and the Secretary-General have included a risk premium (for individuals in units operating without restrictions and assuming exceptional levels of risk), a “key enabling capacities” premium (for those contingents deploying key enablers and force multipliers, always in high demand and short supply), and a readiness premium (adding a one-time extra pay if the trained personnel and equipment were ready in a very short amount of time, as an incentive to improve pre-deployment training and overall readiness). **The gender-balance premium could define a certain set of criteria: percentage of women in the contingent, their rank and function, the specialized training on gender issues that the contingent has undergone, a thorough vetting of perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse, and so forth.** This would all have to be linked closely to force generation, which suggests which countries to approach for pledges and which pledges to accept. **Among the criteria typically used by force generation (such as desire of TCC to contribute, regional proximity, host-country acceptability, and presumed TCC assets), the percentage and specialization of female military personnel should be highlighted as an asset.**

The US, which pays for 28 percent of the peacekeeping budget, as well as other countries such as Japan (11 percent), and France, Germany and UK (7 percent each) might resist any budget increase after the recent renegotiation of the rate. If opposition proves insurmountable, **it could also be deferred for 4 years**, when a new overall rate should once again be renegotiated.

If either a pre-determined premium or per-number higher reimbursement are unacceptable to the donor countries, they could be asked to offer instead **in-kind benefits** instead, both targeted at women specifically –for example, scholarships for advanced training and studies in the donor countries- or at the TCC’s armed forces –for example, donations of communications equipment for the military. Both types of benefits would be incentives tied to measurable increases of women in their military deployments. Other alternatives would be to set up a **special fund with voluntary contributions from donor countries** to finance these incentives to TCCs –although this risks “competing” for the same donors with other under-resourced trust funds devoted to gender equality- or to review **mission budgets** to allocate a percentage to this goal, to be invested in measures that would make peacekeeping missions a better workplace for female military personnel.

In any case, the Secretary-General could review this option and **put it on the table for the next round of reimbursement rates or the introduction (still pending) of performance or capabilities-based premiums.**

¹² It should be noted that the literature on gender equality maintains that for women’s inclusion to make a positive difference, it should at the very least reach 15 percent in co-ed units or a critical mass of 30 percent.