

# Effectiveness of Protection Mandates in Current UN Missions: Application of Lessons on Military Force Preparedness

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## Abstract

*This article aims to study some of the lessons that have emerged out of the effectiveness of the Protection of Civilians (POC) mandate and understand how these can be applied to the deployment training of the UN military forces. The study covers key lessons on POC from the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) studies from the Military Force perspective; application of EPON lessons to enhance the effectiveness of the Military on POC and preparation of Indian peacekeepers on POC aspects.*

## Introduction

The concept of UN Peace Operation (UNPO) has always been an adaptable instrument<sup>1</sup>, ever-evolving yet anchored on the three core principles of consent, impartiality and minimum use of force with certain exceptions.<sup>2</sup> The creation of political reconciliation, a stable society and development will always remain the key milestones to lasting peace. In the complex conflict environment, where the armed groups increasingly use their civil population as a tool for fighting, the *Protection of Civilians* (POC) became one of the prime objectives of UN peace operations since its declaration in 1999. Even after over 20 years of its application, protection activities remain fragile and attempt to create balance with the political objectives of a mission (Russo, 2022).<sup>3</sup> POC is built into the mandates of the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic

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(MINUSCA), UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON)<sup>4</sup> with many multi-lateral research groups, including the USI of India, carried out an extensive study on the effectiveness of UNPO in implementing the POC mandate in these four complex missions. The draft study and its lessons were recently discussed during the EPON week<sup>5</sup> at the UN Headquarters in New York. The lessons of the studies can be applied to train and prepare military and police contingents for protection mandates. Military contingents are trained in a security operations mould, where the use of movement and firepower against a known hostile group remains the prime focus of training and practice. POC requires a different orientation since there are many stakeholders with the same mandate in the field. Collaboration is the key to POC preparation and conduct of UNPOs.

Action for peacekeeping (A4P) agenda<sup>6</sup> given by the UN Secretary-General on 28 March 2018, called on member states, the UN Security Council, host countries, troop and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs), regional partners and financial contributors to renew collective engagement with UNPO, with a renewed commitment to reach for excellence. In March 2021, this was followed up with A4P Plus<sup>7</sup>, as an implementation strategy of the A4P initiative for 2021-2023, which aimed to focus on key priorities to enhance missions' impact. POC remains a key priority in the A4P, and therefore some of the issues concerning POC mandate effectiveness that emerge out of current ongoing EPON studies<sup>8</sup> need to be incorporated to make the UN forces better prepared, even when the member states and the UN attempt to break them out of the 'cycle of insecurity'.<sup>9</sup>

### **Methodology**

The research is based on a systematic analysis of published and presented reports of the EPON, and other peace operations research groups like the International Peace Institute (IPI)<sup>10</sup>, Challenges Forum<sup>11</sup>, USI of India<sup>12</sup>, published UN guidelines and UN Security Council resolutions, and author's interaction with various peace operations' researchers.

### **Importance of POC for a Lasting Peace**

POC Implementing Guidelines for Military Components of United

Nations Peacekeeping Missions were published in February 2015.<sup>13</sup> Since then POC under UNPO has further evolved with new structures, a new policy in November 2019 and a detailed handbook on POC in 2020. POC contributes to peace processes in several ways like providing physical protection, reducing local communal tensions, and lowering rates of death and displacement. When the state is among the perpetrators, POC activities are likely to clash with the state and the peace process (Russo, 2022). Ongoing multidimensional UN missions in Africa have struggled to address the threats posed by violent extremist groups. In Eastern Congo and the CAR, the missions have had to deal with armed groups that often target civilian populations and also the UN peacekeepers.

Kjeksrud (2019)<sup>14</sup> conducted mixed-method research to understand if and how the UN military troops provided POC under imminent physical threat in Africa between 1999 and 2017. The research looked at 200 military protection operations in ten UNPO missions across Africa from 1999 to 2017. The UN troops used force successfully on 76 occasions, while a similar number also resulted in failures. The findings indicated that the UN troops can use force to protect effectively, once the peacekeepers have decided to intervene. The UN Force must be able to analyse perpetrators' motives and modus operandi for attacking civilians and matching threats with timely military responses. Examples quoted in the study were the troops taking part in the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), supporting the Congolese government troops (FARDC) in defeating the M23. In South Sudan, TCCs took a significant risk to protect civilians in Pibor in the face of the massive mobilisation of hostile groups. The findings indicated that even risk-averse troops can protect civilians from violence under the right conditions and with the right training. POC provides unmatched dividends, not only to the UN Mission but also to the UN as a multilateral institution.

### **Lessons on POC from the Recent EPON Studies<sup>15</sup>**

**Collaboration and Jointness.** All components and various interviewees in UN Multi-dimensional missions in Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic were unanimous that there was a need for collaborative efforts on various protection mandates, their interlinkages and cross-component implementation. An important outcome of the discussions was the recommendation

of joint efforts by dedicated protection advisors/focal points within the civilian, military, and police components. When a joint response with various protection mandate actors is undertaken, everyone contributes to a comprehensive plan. The plan will invariably include political engagement at all levels, humanitarian support, physical security, and long-term livelihood establishment. The UN military component of Congo and South Sudan also felt that such a collaboration falls short when viewed from the perspective of rapid deployment of contingents to critical areas or temporary bases. Very few humanitarian or other UN components were found willing to accompany the force to these bases generally due to the non-existent living comforts.

**Early Warning and Information-Sharing.** Members of the humanitarian community of South Sudan and Congo have both good examples and challenges in sharing of information. In South Sudan, information related to the closing of POC sites was not shared during 2020, which added to the tension and mistrust in the delicate relationship among various components. In 2021, this changed and humanitarian counterparts felt confident to interact and seek assistance when faced with a challenge. Further, working in protection actor silos causes frustration on the part of local partners as they are confronted with the same information requests from the different parts of a Mission. Many interviewees pointed out that information sharing is often personality-driven and depends on personal relationships. This critical aspect needs an institutionalised mechanism and must be top driven.

**Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.** Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) violates universally recognised international standards and harms the victims.<sup>16</sup> It also undermines the UN's moral authority, trust and reliability to deliver justice and peace to the local population of a host country. The effects are strategic and invariably harm operational functioning. The move to introduce self-risk assessment for the peacekeepers was considered a best practice, as it acts as an early warning for T/PCCs and highlights opportunities to address concerning indicators before any cases take place. The interviewees also identified some of the issues of 'misreporting', especially around the cases of SEA and conflict-related sexual violation (CRSV). This highlighted a lack of understanding and awareness amongst the military component regarding the distinction of each crime.

**Different Organisational Cultures.** This issue has been highlighted in many prior studies and is unavoidable as in March 2022, 122 nations were contributing to 22 UNPO and political missions. Differences are further pronounced among civilian, military and police colleagues, and a lack of understanding or respect thereof are the challenges mentioned by some reports. The same is generally applicable in all missions and is often personality-driven. There is an urgent need to establish a workable UN culture through these missions.

**Building of Community Trust.** This is of utmost importance as the entire effort of a UNPO mission is towards the safety, security and well-being of the local communities. Developing and maintaining trust amongst the local population is extremely crucial for the eventual political reconciliation and building of peace. The Mission's promises on POC must be delivered promptly. This can help in engaging the vulnerable communities and prove to be an asset for the overall functioning of a mission. Any lapse in this promise can put all components at risk.

#### **Applications of Lessons and Preparation of Peacekeepers**

All the lessons point towards a need for training and briefing of peacekeepers before and after their deployment in the field. There are extensive guidelines on the same provided by the Integrated Training Services of UN DPO in the form of Core Pre-deployment Training Materials<sup>17</sup> (CPTM) and Specialised Training Materials<sup>18</sup> (STM). For the civilian staff of the UN, various modules are prepared and delivered in the mission area. The T/PCCs need to focus on pre-deployment and post-deployment training to apply these lessons and create a more cohesive peace operations ecosystem.

**Pre-Deployment Training.** The military contingents do not need any basic training in their primary security-related operational duties. However, they need to be prepared for the new role in the mission area. Pre-deployment training needs to be structured around the three-module 28 lessons of CPTM and STM. There are Reinforcement Training Packages related to a priority cross-cutting thematic area, relevant to a specific category of personnel to be deployed in missions. Leadership Training modules are framed to specifically enhance the knowledge and skills of senior peace

operations leaders. Based on the EPON lessons, requiring training focus, are as follows:

- **Training.** This must include preparation at a physical, conceptual and moral/ethical level. Understanding of shift from conflict resolution to protection roles. Basic understanding of the structure of a UNPO mission, area of operation, mandate analysis, POC policy and ROE awareness.
- **Understanding of the Stakeholders and Collaboration.** Roles and responsibilities including mandates of the humanitarian components must be thoroughly understood by all. All UN components have stakes in a peace process and understanding their roles will increase respect, trust and collaboration. Diversity in UN peacekeeping missions needs to be respected and understood. There should be extensive briefings on the information flow and joint operations centre for not only information but also POC joint planning, joint analysis and joint assessment of implementation. There is a need of mainstreaming the POC mandate amongst all components.
- **Understanding Non-State Actors.** The UN military component may also have to work with regional military groupings, or international military coalitions, to implement a common international strategy for peace. In the African context, these could be the African Union forces or specialised troops, such as the long-range patrols of the British Army in Mali. These requirements have been amply described in the Handbook on UN Multidimensional PKOs.<sup>19</sup> Different participating actors and the scope of multidimensional UNPOs necessitate increased interface between military and non-military components.<sup>20</sup> The UN forces have to operate in an uncertain environment, which may have transnational crime syndicates, neighbouring countries exploiting the rich resources and non-UN actors, like the Wagner Group<sup>21</sup>, assisting the host governments. Non-UN and groups not a party to a peace accord can be the major spoilers in the process. Training must devise strategies to deal with them and also seek guidelines from the Force HQ in a mission area. It is preferred that each mission has a legal document to determine how to interact with these non-state actors,



including detailed Rules of Engagement (RoE) specifically tailor-made for them.

- **Exercises.** An all component training or joint exercise must be attempted before deployment. This should be based on case studies or practical scenarios. This can also be co-opted with training or briefing on Laws of war (IHL), Human Rights law and understanding of SEA/CRSV.
- **Understanding the Role of Specially Designed Structures.** Examples are understanding the Force Intervention Brigade of Congo mandated with offensive operations and various concepts of Rapidly Deployable Battalions based close to Force and Sector Headquarters to respond to POC matters through short-term Static Combat Deployments. Similarly for South Sudan one should understand the preparation for undertaking short and long-range patrols, and establishing temporary or permanent operating bases.

**Post-Deployment Training.** Various lessons and interactions with the missions recommended that training must include the mentoring programme with 'on the job training' being delivered to focal points in the field. Equally, Force and UN police staff could be 'seconded' to other units to learn 'on the job' and enhance relationships. Integrated training on the basic 'five hats' of protection activities (CRSV, SEA, Gender, Child Protection and POC) should be delivered jointly. The creation of roving training resources with civilian experts from across a mission can be done to deliver sessions on their protection mandates. Integrated scenario-based training should be used to enable participants to work through situations in a simulated environment. Mission components should work together to implement evaluation and impact assessments to ensure training is useful and understood.

### **India's Approach to Pre-Induction Preparation**

Indian troops operate in varying conditions, including active hostility or insurgency areas. The battalions are always ready for a full-scale operational role, anti-insurgency or anti-terror operations and aid to civil authorities on requisition by the civil authorities. The current preparation of the Indian contingents for UNPO goes

through the following process:

- Contingents and various support elements for a PKO are nominated by the Government through Army HQ, normally six months in advance. Mission and AOR analysis are done with support from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) when required, returning elements of the force, and even in conjunction with the Indian embassy in the host country.
- The Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK)<sup>22</sup> carries out training of essential trainers, 3 to 4 months in advance. Training includes scenario and case-based briefings. The CUNPK was conceptualized and raised in 2000 to impart quality training to Indian Peacekeepers and those from other countries. It is a nodal agency for UN pre-deployment training in India and conducts tailor-made national and international courses for Indian Armed Forces officers, select personnel from all services, Central Armed Police Forces and officers from friendly foreign countries. The Centre is a joint venture of the MEA, Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Service Headquarters and serves as a Centre of Excellence in collaboration with the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS<sup>23</sup>). To ensure world-class training, the Centre has a pool of serving and senior veterans and subject matter experts with experience in the UN in the military, police and diplomatic sphere. In case of a returning mission, some of the officers and senior NCOs are utilised to train their troops. A thorough understanding of AOR's three-tier approaches to POC is in-built into the training. The three tiers are, Tier I: Protection through dialogue and engagement; Tier II: Provision of physical protection; and Tier III: Establishment of a protective environment.
- India has taken many initiatives to align training with the new age peacekeeping mandates. National Investigation Course with MP-IDSA, UN and CUNPK is the course about POC, serious violations, and SEA. The last course was conducted for the participants from 20 countries. Besides this, a comprehensive POC Course has been going on under CUNPK which includes policies on SEA<sup>24</sup> and CRSV.<sup>25</sup> Contingent Commanders' Course trains operational and tactical command, focussing on mandate interpretation, ROE,



UN SC Resolutions concerning a mission and POC Policy. The training includes a review and understanding of the latest UN policies on SEA.<sup>26</sup>

- Language training for 30 to 40 personnel and all officers put through pre-deployment training at the CUNPK. Considered average upskilling as language expertise requires more time. There is a need to impart more intensive training, which should continue even after deployment.
- USI of India and ICWA have joined hands in conducting joint discussions on the current concepts and practitioners' inputs. During the year 2021, five webinars were conducted by the USI of India<sup>27</sup> in collaboration with the ICWA. These webinars were attended by in-process peacekeepers, senior leaders and in-mission leadership. The themes included Hostage-taking, Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations, POC<sup>28</sup>, Women, Peace & Security, and Leadership Challenges.
- Once deployed, all Indian peacekeepers are expected to establish good relations with the host authorities and the host community and local and international NGOs' representatives in the operating area. Use of liaison officers, community engagement through WHAM and rural help approach through veterinary clinics or undertaking quick impact projects is encouraged.

## **Conclusion**

The UN multidimensional missions in Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic are complex, protection focussed and multi-domain dependent. Indian troops, deployed in Congo and South Sudan, have excelled in their understanding of the complexities and worked for the welfare and safety of the local communities. Lessons from these missions have brought out the further need to understand the mandates of other components, work on joint implementation of the protection mandate and share information to remain effective. The whole mission has to work together and no single component can implement the assigned mandate in isolation. Extensive pre-deployment and post-deployment training is the key to preparing our peacekeepers to deliver well in increasingly complex peace operation environments.

## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> UN (2022). *Principles of peacekeeping*. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/principles-of-peacekeeping>

<sup>3</sup> Russo, J. (2022). The Protection of Civilians and the Primacy of Politics: Complementarities and Friction in South Sudan, *Journal of International Peacekeeping*, 25(1), 1-32. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18754112-25010001>

<sup>4</sup> Cedric (2022). *Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network*. Accessed on 17 May 2022; available at: <https://effectivepeaceops.net/>

<sup>5</sup> The EPON Week was held from 09 to 13 May 2022 at the UN HQ in New York, attended by the research team including the author, many peace operations and conflict management think tanks, researchers and some of the senior UN DPO officials.

<sup>6</sup> UN Secretary General (2018). *UNSG Remarks to UN Security Council on High Level debate*. Accessed on 12 May 2022; available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-03-28/secretary-generals-remarks-security-council-high-level-debate>

<sup>7</sup> UN Peace Operations (2022). *Action for peacekeeping Plus*. Accessed on 16 May 2022; available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-for-peacekeeping-plus>

<sup>8</sup> UN Web (May 11, 2022). *Lessons Emerging from the Research of the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network*. EPON Draft Reports, as presented in the UN HQ (Under publication)

<sup>9</sup> <https://effectivepeaceops.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/EPON-MINUSCA-Exec-Summary.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ipinst.org/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.challengesforum.org/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://usiofindia.org/>

<sup>13</sup> UNDPO/DFS (2015). *POC: Implementing Guidelines for Military Components of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions*, February 2015; accessed on 19 May 2022 ; available at: [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo\\_poc\\_handbook\\_final\\_as\\_printed.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_poc_handbook_final_as_printed.pdf)

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<sup>16</sup> UN (2022). *Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*. Accessed on 10 May 2022; available at: <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/how-report>

<sup>17</sup> DPET/DPO, UN (2022). *Core Pre-deployment Training Materials*. Accessed on 18 May 2022; available at: <https://research.un.org/revisedcptm2017>

<sup>18</sup> DPET/DPO, UN (2022). *List of Specialised Training Materials*. Accessed on 18 May 2022; available at: <https://research.un.org/en/peacekeeping-community/functional>

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<sup>21</sup> S. Ramani (2021). Russia's Strategy in the Central African Republic, *Royal United Services Institute*, 12 February 2021, accessed on 28 Dec 2021 and available at <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russias-strategy-central-african-republic>.

<sup>22</sup> Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), New Delhi, India (2022). Accessed on 20 May 2022; available at: [shorturl.at/mqBL9](https://shorturl.at/mqBL9)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.claws.in/>

<sup>24</sup> UNGA (2021). *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse*. Report A/75/754. Accessed on 21 May 2022, available at: [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/2021\\_sea\\_report.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/2021_sea_report.pdf)

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