

How does the UN keep the peace?

The title “how does the UN keep the peace” is rather a broad one, given that avoiding the scourge of war was of course the main aim of the UN's foundation. I'm of the opinion that all three pillars of the UN contribute towards both preventing conflict from breaking out and working in post-conflict states. This holistic approach can be broadly categorised as capacity-building, state-building and peacebuilding. Time is short so rather than keep you here all night I hope to give you just a few examples of this area of the UN's work. Later David will be going into what happens when this doesn't go to plan!

Firstly let's take development and the frontline agencies. We're all used to seeing these agencies respond quickly to unpredictable emergency situations, be it man-made or natural disasters. The countries they work in may be varied, but the factors of instability are common:

- Pressure on natural resources – food, water
- Influx of refugees fleeing violence, regional instability
- Corruption and lack of transparency in government
- Lack of the rule of law

They perform life-saving work delivering essential aid all around the world. However they also have longer-term projects and strategies aimed at building the capacity of both the population and the state.

For example, World Food Programme provides food security to the most vulnerable to allow them to use the scant resources they may have to try to secure a better future for themselves. In certain situations, WFP may make the decision to provide meals for young children via schools, to encourage parents to send their children to school for both a good meal and an education. Where necessary, WFP has teams of engineers they can deploy to improve the infrastructure of a country, such as repairing roads, bridges, ports and airports. In the short-term this eases the flow of aid, but this also has a much greater added value to the country longer-term.

When conflict erupts, as we all know, the internal displacement and refugee influx is usually huge. We're seeing a number of such situations at the moment such as in Syria and Mali. The Refugee Agency is there to provide vital basic necessities such as temporary shelter and clean water.

UNHCR also works with states themselves to build their capacity to respond to such crises and ensure that they meet their legal obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention. They do this through:

- Giving states advice on amending their domestic laws regarding refugee protection
- Provides training to government officials
- Provides technical assistance to the judiciary

Long term, UNHCR should essentially be trying to do themselves out of a job by working to find a more permanent solution for these refugees, either ensuring a safe

return home, helping to integrate them into their host communities or resettle them elsewhere.

I'm going to move swiftly on to human rights, a huge area in itself. The Geneva-based Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is perhaps not as well known for their work in the field, however their role in monitoring human rights abuses through Special Procedures, advocating the ratification of international human rights treaties and offering technical assistance to states is vital in helping to keep the peace.

OHCHR is however increasingly working on the ground. They do this through their country and regional offices, the UN's peace missions, and the Rapid Response Unit.

OHCHR currently has 12 country offices, from Bolivia to Cambodia to what's called a "stand-alone office" in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. These offices monitor and report on the human rights situations in the country, and in partnership with governments assist with the development of national capacities to address human rights issues. They also conduct this work on the regional level working alongside major regional organisations.

With regards to the missions, OHCHR provides support focussed on:

- ensuring justice and accountability
- preventing and redressing human rights violations
- strengthening national institutions
- mainstreaming human rights in all UN programmes

In 2010, 635 OHCHR staff worked in 14 missions around the world undertaking this work.

The Rapid Response Unit is deployed in anticipation of a deteriorating human rights situation and is often requested to conduct fact-finding missions or commissions of inquiry. These missions are vital in providing early warnings when a conflict might break out and in finding long-term justice and reconciliation in a post-conflict state.

With regards to peace and security, I'd like to start with what is possibly a lesser known UN body, the Peacebuilding Commission. How many people here have heard of the Commission? Set up in 2005 as part of the World Summit package of reforms, the Commission has a lower profile than say the Human Rights Council has had since 2005. It is an intergovernmental body mandated to bring together all of the relevant actors which contribute towards post-conflict recovery, to focus on institution building and advising on best practices and any potential gaps which may threaten the peace.

The framework of the Secretariat to the Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office, is based on the Secretary-General's 2009 report "Peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict". The immediate aftermath of a conflict being defined as the two years following the end of a conflict. The Office works on a number of projects aimed at giving people and the state the support needed to get back on their feet.

One important area in which they work is getting ex-combatants reintegrated into society and finding them jobs in order to make being a hired gun less attractive. They're given skills training, then the opportunity to work within cooperatives, eventually moving on to micro-finance programmes where they are able to build up a business of their own.

The Commission also places high importance on national ownership of any peacebuilding initiatives in order for it to create a sustainable peace. Recognising the plethora of actors that are now active on the ground in conflict states, not least NGOs, the UN can only be as successful as its partners in government, the private sector and civil society. Indeed, they describe this as part of their "entry strategy", not an "exit strategy". This can be incredibly difficult in conflict zones where the basic functions of the state are often barely there.

Another priority of the Commission is the inclusion of women in peacebuilding. Security Council Resolution 1325 called for equal participation by women in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, however over the last 25 years only 1 in 40 peace treaty signatories have been women. The rest of the stats are equally worrying:

- Only 9 per cent of the 14,000 police officers and 2 per cent of the 85,000 military personnel in UN peacekeeping operations are women
- There have been no female chief mediators in UN-brokered peace talks
- Between 1990 and 2010 only 12 out of 585 peace accords referred to women's needs in rehabilitation or reconstruction

The challenges are clearly vast. The Commission is working with UN Women to implement a seven point action plan aimed at addressing women's participation in peacebuilding with measurable objectives.

Obviously a crucial partner in peacebuilding is the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). DPKO has evolved enormously over the years since it was first founded in 1948 to become what it is today. Today's talk is actually rather well timed as in New York, the Security Council is holding a debate entitled "UN Peacekeeping: a multi-dimensional approach." So if there's anything we miss tonight check out the debate online! Chaired by the current Council President, Pakistan, not coincidentally the largest contributor of troops and police to DPKO, the debate will be addressing a resolution on the complexities of peacekeeping missions today, and the vital element of peacebuilding.

Although every mandate is different, DPKO's approach to peacebuilding, much like that of the development and human rights actors, is predicated on capacity-building. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's statement to the Security Council today (copies of which are available) said:

"Inclusivity and institution-building are critical to preventing a relapse into conflict. Peacekeeping missions play a vital role on both of these fronts. They promote national reconciliation. And peacekeeping missions help support national institution building as we are seeing in South Sudan, Liberia and Haiti."

DPKO does this in a number of ways:

Firstly, rule of law assistance. Defined as the legal and political framework by which all individuals and institutions should be held accountable, this area has been paid more and more attention in recent years and was the subject of a High-Level Meeting ahead of last September's General Assembly opening.

In a fragile state the absence of the rule of law is one of the major factors of instability. On a very basic level, courthouses and police stations may have been decimated. Or as was the case in East Timor in the 90s, all documentation destroyed. Prisons may be overcrowded or understaffed, and the judiciary may be weak and vulnerable to corruption.

DPKO provide police, judiciary and criminal justice support to the state to help strengthen these institutions and provide training to their officials. Establishing the rule of law is clearly a long-term process and something which DPKO is not willing or able to fulfil themselves. DPKO seek to provide support so that these essential services can be performed transparently and with accountability by the state.

Although this is a clearly crucial component of keeping the peace in any state, let alone a fragile one, resources for this are slim:

In 2010, rule of law personnel were deployed across 17 missions, including:

- 180 Judicial Affairs Officers
- 175 Corrections Officers
- 14,000 Police Officers (of which, as mentioned, 9.8% is female)

Working with the civilian population is also crucial to peacekeeping operation, particularly on the regional and local levels. Civil Affairs posts have three core roles:

- Monitoring the progress and implementation of the peace process, including providing early warnings where necessary
- Develop conditions where the population feel confident engaging with the peace process
- Providing support to local state institutions to encourage good governance

The final area I'd like to highlight is electoral assistance, that important step towards a hopefully more stable society. DPKO often plays a crucial supportive role in the achievement of free and fair elections. Again there are three key roles it plays:

- Primarily it is through technical assistance in terms of a security presence (to allow voters to cast their votes free from the fear of reprisals), advice on legal aspects, logistical assistance and public information assistance. The most obvious recent example of this is the referendum on the independence of South Sudan.
- election monitoring – no longer common, however it was requested by Cote D'Ivoire in 2010

- organization and supervision of elections – again, this is much less common now that the UN's focus is on technical assistance to the state in question rather than the total running of elections, as was seen in Cambodia

Over the last 20 years the UN provided electoral assistance to more than 100 countries.

I realise that was the briefest of overviews but hopefully that will have given you a sense of peacebuilding as a priority of the UN as a whole, and indeed something which involves much wider constituencies than just the UN. There's much I've not had time to go into such as the contribution of UNDP, and the Responsibility to Protect concept which is a UNA-UK policy programme and warrants a whole evening's discussion in itself. I'm happy to answer what questions I can in the Q & A about UNA-UK's peace & security work and would love to hear members' views, particularly if it's something they are thinking of submitting to Policy Conference.

Thank you for your attention.