

## Policy Memorandum

MEMORANDUM FOR: World Bank Social Development Civil Society  
FROM: Group 6, Athgo International Third Annual Global Forum, World Bank Headquarters, Washington D.C.  
SUBJECT: The creation of *Kids Voice*, a watchdog agency that combats sexual abuse of minors committed by UN peacekeepers.

**I. Action-Forcing Event:** UN peacekeepers are sent into an area of conflict with the goal of preventing further harm to the citizens. Unfortunately, there are peacekeepers who perpetrate the heinous crimes that they were sent to prevent. According to the U.N. Secretariat, there has been sexual abuse by peacekeepers in virtually all of the UN missions overseas, including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Haiti.<sup>1</sup> Most recently, within months of the UN arrival in southern Sudan in 2007, more than 20 reports of sexual abuse of minors were recorded.<sup>2</sup> These statistics underestimate the scale of abuse since much exploitation is not reported by the victims.<sup>3</sup> Such abuse severely damages UN integrity, counters the purpose of UN missions and exploits some of the world's most vulnerable people. In addition, lack of disciplinary consequences for perpetrators enables and furthers a culture of "impunity, exploitation and sexual chauvinism."<sup>4</sup>

**II. Background/Analysis:** In 2005 the UN created the Memorandum of Understanding in order to "hold contributors accountable for their peacekeepers' behaviour."<sup>5</sup> The UN has recently revised the MOU to make states accountable for the actions of their troops.<sup>6</sup> However recordings of sexual abuse and the resulting responses vary, as policies and guidelines set by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations are not always practiced.<sup>7</sup> In addition, while the standard of conduct provides a guide for peacekeepers to follow, the UN lacks both political and legal authority to penalize offenders.<sup>8</sup> As a result many perpetrators "escape punishment because national governments have either refused or have been slow in meting out justice within their own court systems."<sup>9</sup> While the international community claims zero tolerance policy to child sexual abuse, such promises have not been followed by action in the field.<sup>10</sup> Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the child's right to protection from mental and physical violence, and specifically mentions sexual abuse.

**III. Recommendation:** The organization will provide a channel for those affected or aware of abuse. Ground teams will be deployed into regions where active peacekeeping missions have been sent. Women will be trained to police the welfare of their community through the employment of local community leaders and teachers. Women's training will raise awareness of abuse problems, fight cultural stigma associated with sexual abuse, and inform them of their rights (under IHL) which peacekeepers are required to honour.<sup>11</sup> Another focus of the organization will be the child victims of abuse by peacekeepers. The intervention center will offer medical, psychological and emotional care to the victims and will perform an initial assessment if further examination is needed. All victims will be made aware of the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Testing will be available and further medical support provided where necessary.

The work of the center will be publicised through a local media campaign. This will not be limited to conventional electronic/print media, but will include innovative means of community outreach, such as street play. Joint collaboration between local citizens, the watchdog organization, and (where relevant) local NGO's will be encouraged. Funding may be obtained through the World Bank's Social Development Civil Society.

This program offers a unique solution compared to other initiatives of recent years. The grassroots focus of the organization differentiates it from most other multilateral measures. It will rely on the empowered voice of the victim as a mechanism for accountability as opposed to military tribunals. To some degree, this can circumvent the accountability problems within peacekeeping operations, as peacekeepers who abuse their charges may not be held accountable by the deploying nation, either because of lack of information or political will.<sup>12</sup>

It is the team's belief that the awareness role of this campaign will dramatically reduce the incidence of child abuse by peacekeepers. A remaining problem, however, is promoting the accountability of abusive soldiers. The organization has no legal jurisdiction and cannot ensure that the perpetrators will be tried or punished for their actions. Yet through raising awareness of the number of crimes committed by each peacekeeping contingent, countries with poor records may face public and international pressure to bring the perpetrator to justice.

**IV. Group's Role:** As young professionals, the individuals of the group can initiate this proposed policy by advocating children's rights, calling attention to the issue and appealing to the global human interest. As a third-party outsider, the team can assess the basic human needs/rights of (potential) victims, free from political or financial motivation or bias towards race or culture. The team will continue lifting the veil on NGOs/governments.

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<sup>1</sup> Holt, Kate and Sarah Hughes. UN Staff Accused of Raping Children in Sudan. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1538476/UN-staff-accused-of-raping-children-in-Sudan.html>)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Peacekeepers abusing children. BBC. 27 May 2008  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/7420798.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7420798.stm)

<sup>4</sup> De Londras, Fiona. UN Peacekeepers and Sexual Abuse.  
<http://blogcritics.org/archives/2005/10/24/121417.php>

<sup>5</sup> Schneider, Kathleen. (UN observer.org) Peace Women. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. *Accountability for Sexual Exploitation & Abuse in UN Peacekeeping Operations: the Promise of the new model MOU*.  
<http://www.peacewomen.org/resources/Peacekeeping/modelMOU.html>

<sup>6</sup> Andrews, Katherine. "Signs of Progress in Improving UN Peacekeeper Accountability. Henry L. Stimson Center for Pragmatic Steps for Global Security. <http://www.stimson.org/?SN=FP200710151465>

<sup>7</sup> Refugee International.  
<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/7934/>

<sup>8</sup> Deen, Thalif. UN Lacks Muscle to Fight Abuse in Peacekeeping. Inter Press Service. 8 July 2008. Asian Tribune  
<http://www.asiantribune.com/?q=node/12046>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Peacekeepers abusing children. BBC. 27 May 2008  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/7420798.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7420798.stm)

<sup>11</sup> Section 1.2 UNPO Principle and Guidelines: "United Nations peacekeeping personnel - whether military, police or civilian - should act in accordance with international human rights law and understand how the implementation of their tasks intersects with human rights."

<sup>12</sup> The standard method under international law for the persecution for crimes while on military duty is the use of military tribunal.