

# Learning from Experience - International Policing

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## Main recommendations

### Establish a knowledge-management mechanism to collect and transfer knowledge on police in international operations

- In order to continue to provide relevant, targeted and efficient contributions to international peace and security, Norway should set up a knowledge-management mechanism which gathers, systematizes and analyses experiences and lessons identified by police officers who have served in, or provided training towards, peace operations, stabilization missions and other assistance missions.
- The intended outcome is to generate knowledge that can inform the policy and practice of international deployments, including better targeting of needs through the appropriate competences, and improving planning, training and follow-up, in the interest of those sending, providing and receiving the assistance.
- Other government agencies that send civilian experts abroad (e.g. diplomats, NGO personnel, humanitarian personnel) could be included in this mechanism.
- We recommend setting up a mechanism consisting of representatives from the relevant ministries, the unit responsible for recruitment, training and deployment, as well as an assigned researcher.

## Introduction

There has been a steady increase in the numbers of deployed police officers and in the number of operations in which the police form an integral element. This reflects the general growth in multidimensional peace operations but also the relative importance of the role of policing within these missions. Notably, there has been a clear increase of the complex tasks involved in supporting police capacity-building and institutional reform

in host states.

However, the growth in the number of tasks and operations has not been accompanied by changes in the operating model of UN Police, resulting in a large gap between expectations and capacities.

The problem is not that we lack knowledge about how police peacekeeping could be done differently and better. Various reviews and recommendations have been produced in recent years – one of them calling for no less than a paradigm shift in the operating model of the UN Police (UNPOL) if police components are to have better chances of achieving their intended results. But reforms are needed not only at UN HQ. If police-contributing countries are serious about supporting reforms to the UN Police, they must also commit to implementing reforms at home aimed at making their police contributions to peace operations better equipped and prepared to contribute effectively.

In the Norwegian MFA-funded project ‘Learning from Experience – International Policing’ we examined several aspects of police participation in international deployments in order to extract best practices and lessons learned. The project consisted of four main parts: 1) looking at how Norway and like-minded countries manage knowledge in connection to the recruitment and deployment of police officers in international missions; 2) analysing training experiences for peace operations; 3) gathering, systematizing and analysing experiences and insights of individual Norwegian police officers who had served in international operations (1989–2016); and 4) analysing the Specialized Police Team model that Norway deployed to MINUSTAH to build Haitian police capacity to investigate sexual violence. This Policy Brief sums up the main findings of the project, and offers policy recommendations on the basis of our research.

## Lessons on knowledge management

### Main findings

Of the around 90 countries that contribute police personnel to international missions, only a handful (notably, Australia, Finland and Germany, and to a certain extent Norway) are known to systematically interview police who have returned from international deployments, so as to gather information and identify lessons learned to improve future deployments.

Drawing on a brief review of how the knowledge mechanisms employed by various countries function, we identify some best practices as well as gaps in knowledge generation and recommendations for how to overcome this gap. We argue that establishing coherent systems for gathering on-the-ground experience of police deployed in conflict zones is invaluable for learning lessons and developing more effective police training programmes, thereby enhancing the impact of police deployed in international operations.

A knowledge mechanism would help a police-contributing country (PCC) to identify problems related to deployment, and gauge the effectiveness of its own pre-deployment training and support mechanisms for police peacekeepers, as well as providing useful information for correcting and improving performance of the police officer's role in the peace operation. Such a mechanism may enable practical, on-the-ground perspectives as to the impact and efficacy of efforts to support host-state police reform and capacity-building. Thus, such a mechanism could also help to inform policy and programming.

Recruitment, selection and training are interactive components of the larger system that shapes the quality and impact of police personnel deployed on peacekeeping missions. While efforts can and must be made to improve these parts of the system, an understanding of how the whole functions and is affected by other parts of the system is essential if corrective action is to be effective. Actively seeking feedback from police peacekeepers can help in identifying and documenting organizational processes such as management practices, administrative requirements, and leadership behaviour that shape the system and that impede change. In this way, PCC knowledge management mechanisms can contribute to efforts to inform and support reform of dysfunctional and inefficient structures and processes in UN peacekeeping.

### Recommendations

- Establish a knowledge mechanism, such as a survey to be administered to all returning police peacekeepers, and (perhaps) civilian experts who have been deployed to work in support of policing and rule-of-law functions in peace operations.
- The survey should ask respondents to identify areas where they felt they achieved their intended objectives, where they encountered difficulties, and factors that accounted for success or failure; as well as, where possible, feedback on issues relevant to strategic reform of UN peacekeeping.

- Create a database where responses can be stored and accessed, and where matters of interest to the PCC can be tracked over the long term.
- Involve an academic team/institute as partner with the police in the knowledge mechanism in order to encourage practitioner–academic exchange and produce policy-relevant research on police in international operations.
- Seek opportunities to exchange information with various countries on police deployment experiences.

## Lessons on recruitment and training of police for peace operations

### Main findings

There are various continuing problems in getting appropriately qualified and skilled police personnel deployed to UN peace operations. As UN police have become increasingly responsible for supporting capacity-building and police reform in host states, the need for specialized skills has increased. However, missions still have difficulty meeting their requirements for police with specialized skills. Recruitment standards remain relatively low, and specially skilled police who are deployed are sometimes assigned to roles within the mission that do not make use of their expertise.

Further, despite the clear benefits of deploying police who have been adequately prepared, not all police who are deployed have received pre-deployment training, and not all those who have been trained are subsequently deployed. Two weeks is viewed by many police peacekeepers as insufficient time to cover the expansive list of topics now featured in pre-deployment training curricula, and certain topics receive too little attention.

While the ratio of Formed Police Units (FPUs) and Individual Police Officers (IPOs) should shift over time as the mission environment stabilizes and the specialized work of capacity-building and institutional reform gets underway, selection and recruitment criteria are still not producing the specialists required, and there continues to be a heavy focus on numbers rather than quality. Corruption among certain PCCs in the selection and recruitment of police peacekeepers creates further problems of inappropriate and underqualified personnel.

Resolving the recurrent problem of getting well-qualified police peacekeepers deployed to missions will require more than simple technical fixes; the human resources challenge for police in UN operations goes beyond recruitment and training, and includes issues of leadership, resourcing, and serious commitment to monitoring and evaluation of performance. The problem is complex and multifaceted, embedded within organizational structures and processes that themselves require attention and dedicated efforts for institutional learning. Solutions call for commitment and corrective action on the part of PCCs, UN HQ, and mission leadership.

**Recommendations:**

- The UN Police Division should provide updated training guidance based on the recently elaborated doctrinal framework (the Strategic Guidance Framework – SGF).
- Various substantive and methodological elements of the standardized pre-deployment training curriculum should be revisited and expanded, in particular the role of police in protection of civilians.
- Alternative mechanisms for supplementing UNPOL qualitative deficiencies have emerged and should be further developed, including the use of the Standing Police Capacity, civilian experts, and specialized police teams.
- PCCs that provide pre-deployment training should conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of that training, by surveying former participants as well as host-state counterparts and the mission police components to which they are assigned. The results of such monitoring and evaluation should then be used to refine and update pre-deployment training methods and content, and contribute to UN development of further curricula and training standards.

**Lessons from Norwegian police peacekeepers****Main findings**

The purpose of the survey of Norwegian police who have served in international missions since 1989 until today was to systematically gather the knowledge that they bring home from such operations. The survey was distributed to 440 police officers and 277 responses were received (78% from men, 22% from women).

Most expressed the view that the expectations they had when applying for the job were largely fulfilled. Only 5% of the respondents stated that they had no wish to work in an international operation again.

The majority of those who served abroad were motivated by the desire to learn something new, and to teach and help others. Many stated that the pre-departure training had largely covered their requirements, although several had envisioned a somewhat longer training period before departure, preferably together with the Norwegian Armed Forces. The majority received additional training in the field.

While they were in the field, there were few who believed that the national police showed any improvement that could be ascribed to the international presence the participants represented. Several explained that achieving the overall goal of supporting police reform and capacity-building was complicated because many of the desired changes could only take place over a longer period, and because they as police officers could see only a small part of a larger picture. However, the vast majority reported that they essentially performed the tasks assigned to them; and an average of 4 (on a scale 0–6, with 6 as the highest) felt that they made a difference.

Many said that the main challenges for the police in the country where they worked were related to conditions

extending far beyond the police as such. Examples here included widespread corruption, a non-functioning state system, lack of resources, limited expertise, and ongoing conflicts. Cooperation between the police and the local judiciary was perceived as poor, as was cooperation between the international police and the judiciary, although this was slightly better. The majority found it important to understand the mandate of the international operation, and had the impression that while the international police of higher rank were familiar with the mandate, local police officers of lower rank were not.

Most felt safe in the field; however, 60 participants (22%) said they felt less safe. Altogether 75% reported that they had not experienced anything traumatic, while 25% said that they had. Of the latter, 61% answered that they were cared for and received adequate follow-up, but that was not the case for the remaining 39%. A total of 32% observed misconduct (such as sexual abuse, corruption, alcohol and drug abuse) among international personnel, and 62% stated that measures were implemented to prevent such abuse. A large majority held that focusing on women, peace and security is important because women and children are the most vulnerable sector of the population in conflict areas.

Upon their return, 83% underwent debriefing. Many suggested ways in which this could be done differently. A large majority believed that the experience they gained abroad was relevant to their daily work as a police officer in Norway. However, only a minority felt that this expertise was regarded as relevant or was even recognized by their Norwegian employers. In other words, few believed that the international experience had a positive impact on their career.

**Recommendations:**

- Establish a knowledge-management mechanism to collect and transfer knowledge.
- Conduct systematic monitoring before, during and after deployment.
- Systematize learning at three levels: individual, and police organization nationally and locally.
- Consider pooling training and follow-up mechanisms of police with other departments and agencies that send personnel abroad on government contracts.
- Establish clearer strategic guidance on the aims and intentions behind Norwegian participation in an operation, and how to achieve the stated aims.

**Lessons from Norway's Specialized Police Team (SPT)****Main findings**

As shown by the experience of the Norwegian-led SPT to combat gender- and sexual-based violence in Haiti, the introduction of SPTs expands the capacity of the UN police component to respond to the needs of host-state police and rule-of-law institutions.

The SPT may serve as a partial corrective to some of the problems commonly encountered by IPOs, like inappropriate

assignments and roles on arrival in a UN field mission, and under-utilization of their individual skills and expertise. SPTs offer opportunities to improve capacity-building and assistance to host-state police by providing a more cohesive model and concentrated delivery of assistance. Furthermore, the SPT has provided greater continuity in capacity-building assistance to the Haitian National Police than have individual police officers (IPOs) engaged in similar tasks. Its project cycle of three to five years extends beyond the deployment period of one or two years for IPOs, even when they have their terms prolonged. The more coordinated collective approach of the SPT extends over a longer period, offering potentially greater impact when compared to IPOs.

However, we have also found that SPTs encounter certain conditions within the UN system that have continued to undermine the effectiveness of the United Nations Police: resistance by certain members of mission leadership, and rigid bureaucratic procedures that were difficult to adapt to the new mechanism of the SPT.

#### Recommendations

- Conduct a comprehensive pre-mission assessment.
- Consult senior police component and mission leadership in the field, and UN Headquarters in New York, to ensure buy-in and support for the team's work.
- Engage host-state police leaders and other local stakeholders from the start, to formulate a project that responds to local needs and enjoys local ownership.
- Provide the SPT with independent project funding, to empower the team to plan and implement specific projects.
- Appoint an administrative focal point within the SPT to help navigate the team through the necessary UN bureaucratic procedures.
- SPT members should actively engage with other relevant

mission components, UN programmes and agencies dealing with justice, human rights, rule of law, gender and development, with a view to building confidence, exchanging information, and collaborating in support of police and rule-of-law reform.



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