

Gendering the Security Sector

Protecting Civilians Against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Executive Summary

International responses to the conflicts in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) bordering Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda have been widely criticized as inadequate. The region is poorly understood by the international community. The general international preference for working with states and institutions – in a region where none of these exists in the form familiar to the West – complicates responses significantly.

Of major concern is the parallel development of a UN-supported security sector of Congolese personnel who commit violations of human rights violations, making the Congolese army (FARDC) and police (PNC) the major perpetrator group of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). This report argues that, in order to deal with this problem, we must stop seeing sexual violence as solely a ‘gender issue’ that is usually met with scepticism or at best dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis. Instead, it should be included as a *key issue of Protection of Civilians (PoC)* and a major operational component in future work on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR). PoC is high on the MONUC mandate – but the correlation between intensified military operations supported by MONUC and the Congolese government and the increase in civilian sufferings such as displacement, rape and plunder is a matter of serious concern for any future protection initiatives.

Three interrelated protection areas must be addressed. One element is the physical protection of civilians, through defence forces limiting the attacks by rebel groups, but it is not sufficient for dealing with high levels of SGBV, especially when most of the reported crimes are committed by the Congolese army. The second area is the social protection of civilians. This involves a crucial and long-term approach to attitudes and internalization of people’s legal rights, both civilians and uniformed personnel, against SGBV. Unless communities deal with SGBV by taking ownership of the problem, there will not be an end to the violence. Addressing also male roles in gender training is necessary so that gender does not become solely a women’s issue, but is seen as a fundamental aspect of operationalizing protection. Thirdly, the legal protection of civilians implemented by the police and justice sector is a crucial component in discouraging future high levels of SGBV.

1. Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo has over the last two decades been the stage of a continental war, local conflicts and internecine violence that have caused appealing losses and damages towards the civilian population. Civilians have been the primary victims of the conflicts and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is major challenge to peace and reconciliation. Today, the largest and most expensive UN mission (MONUC) is present in the DRC with a mandate to protect civilians and support and train the state's security apparatus "to build credible, cohesive, and disciplined Congolese armed forces and to develop the capacities of the Congolese national police and related law enforcement agencies".¹ However, the general international preference for working with states and institutions in a region where none of these exists in the form familiar to the West complicates responses significantly. As Dunn (2003:165) argued, little is known about the Great Lakes region, bordering Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi other than assumptions such as "inherent savagery, (...) barbarism, [and] an apolitical chaos beyond the rational comprehension of the "civilized" West".

This report outlines three core, interrelated elements of protecting civilians against SGBV. One is direct physical protection by using the defence forces to protect civilians from SGBV attacks. The second element is the social protection of civilians: this involves changing harmful traditions and attitudes that contribute to the high levels of SGBV. This element requires long-term societal transformation. Lastly, there is the application of legal frameworks to protect civilians against SGBV, implemented by the police and justice sector. This is central in order to discourage future high levels of criminal acts.

These three elements of protection are perceived as part of the security sector, which is defined broadly as 'all government institutions and other entities with a role in ensuring the security of a state and its population' (Bastick et al. 2007:145). Efforts of Security Sector Reform (SSR) should include all three above-mentioned elements of protection, incorporating gender perspectives at all levels.

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¹ UNSC Resolution 1856 (2008).

The report is structured as following. First, there will be a brief overview on the UN resolutions relevant for the protection mandate and gender issues. In the second chapter, there will be a discussion concerning gender in the context of the DRC. Thirdly, the main content of the report will cover all three above mentioned areas of protection, and finally, a concluding remark based on discussion is offered.

Protection of Civilians (PoC) has been developed as a guiding principle for UN peace operations since it was formalized in 1999. The basis for this concept is rooted in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) following the concern for the humanitarian situation of civilians trapped in wars and conflicts worldwide.² Gender perspectives have been formally included at all levels of the UN peace operations since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. Sexual violence is among the many gender issues to receive considerable attention, due largely the gendered war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda during the early 1990s. The widespread use of sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) over the past decade has partly been the reason for Resolution 1820 (2008), on recognizing sexual violence in war and conflict as a war crime. With S/RES/1820, the link was forged between sexual violence in war and conflict as a threat to international peace and security. As a result of S/RES/1325, an Office of the Gender Advisor (OGA) was established in every UN mission, mandated to support, monitor and coordinate the implementation of S/RES/1325, and later also S/RES/1820, S/RES/1888 and S/RES/1889 on violence against women and a follow-up of 1325 in peace operations.

Despite these encouraging developments and the commitment displayed by UN member states, the results on the ground give less reason for optimism. The lack of resources, knowledge and political will have affected both the PoC in practice, and gender mainstreaming of the security sector. For instance, the OGA offices lack field officers to ensure that other sections have the necessary capacity and knowledge on the content of these resolutions. Mainstreaming of gender perspectives requires a strong, capable and proactive OGA. To date, gender perspectives have usually been included in an *ad hoc* manner without identifying necessary mechanisms, such as local ownership of gender concepts, or monitoring the effects of training staff in gender perspectives. Furthermore, various actors in the security sector often take advantage of people's vulnerability in conflict and post-conflict situations. There needs to be specific emphasis on the security sector when considering the prevention and protection against sexual and gender-

² See Lie & de Carvalho (2009) for a conceptual overview and challenges to the PoC concept.

based violence (SGBV). Perceptions of SGBV as ‘special’ or ‘soft’, arguably ‘women’s issues’, should be discouraged: SGBV needs to be recognized as a key protection issue.

In this report, the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) will be used to highlight key areas of gendering SSR efforts. Central to the physical and legal protection of civilians is to support a more general process of professionalization of the security sector. This should include training, logistics, monitoring etc. of the Congolese army (FARDC) and the police (PNC), while simultaneously building the capacities of a fairer justice sector, for the legal protection of civilians. At the social protection level, there need to be opportunities and incentives for people to reflect on their gender roles in the society. Here it should be noted that male roles and masculinity are rarely taken into account in gender training, which is often dismissed as solely a women’s issue. That further limits the possibilities of addressing the root causes of violent reactions such as SGBV. Most members of the traditional security sector are men, so it is essential to balance gender training to include both men and women.

The empirical data reported in this report are based on several field visits to the DRC in 2008 and 2009 – to the capital Kinshasa, to Goma, Masisi and Sake in North Kivu, and to Bukavu in South Kivu. In addition, inputs from observers to MONUC, monitoring the Congolese police, have been important for some of the long-term perspectives on the challenges facing the security sector. The framework of this report builds on the relevant UNSC resolutions (see bibliography) concerning protection of civilians against SGBV. Additional background documents include the final version of the *Comprehensive Strategy on Combating Sexual Violence in the DRC* (18 March 2009) from the office of the Senior Sexual Violence Advisor and Coordinator in MONUC. More broadly, the publication *Gender and Security Reform Toolkit* (Bastick & Valasek, 2008) and the 2007 Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) publication *Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict: Global Overview and Implications for the Security Sector* have been used as manuals for including gender as a component of SSR. One challenge with these toolkits is that they are general by definition, and written in a cookery-book manner, making it difficult to move from these ideal types of thinking to practice. Nevertheless, few publications can provide such systematic thinking on SSR and gender issues, including sexual violence, so they are important assets towards a more coordinated approach on these matters.

2. Gender: A problematic concept in the DRC

The term *gender* is commonly used in peace-building and peacekeeping missions, yet it is difficult to de-code or interpret the meaning of the term. In many cases, it is inaccurately understood simply as a substitute for 'women'. Furthermore, gender analysis has often focused on women's special needs in conflicts and forced policymakers to prioritize women and girls (The Human Security Report, 2005:111). However, women have often been labelled in a category of women and children, thus giving women a largely passive and victimized role that is too simplistic. The agency role of both women and men is important to recognise them as responsible persons, i.e. to act or refuse to act. More correctly, gender can be defined as 'the particular roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours and values that society ascribes to women and men' (Denham, 2008:3). Thus, gender usually describes socially constituted differences between the same groups (Childs, in Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007:5).

Based on this definition, one can argue that unequal treatment of women in relation to men and sexual violence against women are able to persist through unquestioning acceptance of adopted beliefs (Sen, 2006:2). Vetlesen (2005:198-9) argues that survival of constructed perceptions about gender identity and femininity and masculinity is a power tool to conduct such atrocities as sexual violence. The gender identities are associated with strength as opposed to weakness and the power to control versus the weakness of being controlled. Further, the actual plurality of identities that people share can be narrowed down to a few during war, and such sharp categorizations can have explosive results. During war and conflict, gender roles can often become more enhanced as men are forced to fight and women are left to take care of her family. Real and constructed identities can determine who is defined as an insider and who are aliens, ultimately separating family and friends. Vetlesen (ibid) argues that the killing of a person can be the result of perceiving him or her as only having one identity, i.e. the identity as a member of the 'enemy' group. Further, the poorer members of this group can be the easiest targets to kill or rape as they live in scanty shelters and need to go out unprotected in a hostile environment in order to provide for daily necessities. On the other hand, however, people living on the margin of society more easily can join rebel groups as they have little to lose and potentially much more to gain by taking up arms. Thus, the strong reliance on social and group

identity, and the role of the social group as the primary provider of security, and the moral limitations of applying social norms narrowly to the group, all result in a greater likelihood that when two groups come into conflict, the men will be killed and the women – as symbols of the men and the group – be abused.

The problem with gender analysis is that gender analysis is often discussed theoretically, often far away from the actual targets and is rarely sufficiently implemented and integrated in conflict resolution, emergency aid and development projects. Henceforth, there is a need to understand the background for the underlying gender issues in the DRC. First of all, we need to understand that the state in DRC have hardly offered any public services and bureaucracy and national army had never existed in the traditional sense. Hence, instead of a narrow interpretation of the state as the central actor, Bøås & Dunn (2007:31) emphasize the centrality of identity and belonging in explaining the last decades of warfare in the DRC, issues that traditional peace-building missions have been less concerned about. The debate concerning identity and belonging to land in the eastern DRC has shown devastating effects of real and perceived marginalization and poverty. According to Bøås (2007:45), the state's failure to provide for its citizens, has created large segments of marginalized people in the economic and political life. This has leads to an intensified battle over the political life in terms of the distribution of identities, resources, ideas and positions. Seeing yourself as 'autochthony' or 'son of the soil' and your counterparts as 'allochthony' or 'strangers' can entitle you to a struggle over the resources. The danger of categorizing people into 'owners' and 'aliens' is that extremely violent measures can be legitimized. The pre-existing gender inequalities in the DRC might increase the brutality towards female members of an out-group, as they are not only outside the moral universe of the perpetrators but below the status of the out-group men.

Subsequently, some perspectives concerning the apparently high-level of SGBV in the DRC can be discussed. All parties in the war and following conflicts in the DRC are claimed to have used sexual violence, including MONUC, the FARDC and the PNC. In a study on FARDC soldiers, Baaz & Stern (2008:75-76) found that many of the soldiers' motivation for committing severe human rights violations, such as sexual violence, were explained indirectly as a livelihood strategy and an expression of suffering and frustration in relation to the feelings of neglect and poverty. First of all, in terms of poverty, the Congolese soldiers are among the poorest section of the society were a theoretical monthly salary of \$10-40 is rarely paid. In addition, the mortality rate among soldiers' children remains high and school enrolment is practically zero. The soldiers argued that order and discipline towards the

military leaders was hard to follow when they neglected the soldiers and their families' basic rights including salary, medical and funereal expenses. Henceforth, as the Congolese women are the major provider of agricultural products, soldiers from various groups attack and/or kidnap women as a means of survival and gratification. Furthermore, the element "my wife does not love me" was repeatedly found in the majority of the conversations about rape and other forms of sexual violence in Baaz & Stern's (2008) study. Central was that the male soldiers felt that this lack of love was caused by their poverty condition and they could not fulfil their role in the family as the head and the provider of their family's basic needs. Further, the male soldiers expressed a fear and suspicion towards their wives that they would find other men that could make ends meet. The women were depicted by these men as unreliable and opportunistic if the women see better opportunities presented. The soldiers interviewed mixed these gender discourses about their women as being unreliable and opportunistic with a rationalization of their violent behaviour towards other women.

3. Protection of Civilians: Gendering (In)Security

The word gender describes everything that is weak
(old people, women and children)
and is in need of protection.³

Security issues have long been viewed almost by matter of definition as a masculine area, even though insecurity is a highly gendered field. The interstate and civil wars in parts of Africa over the past two decades exemplify a gendered, age-old pattern of civilian experiences of war (Slim, 2008:39). The direct killings and wounding of civilians have generally been directed at men, whereas rape and other forms of sexual violence are more often targeted against women and girls. Gender-based violence is also common against refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) – for instance as human shields for militias hiding from government troops. A further enormous *and* gendered security challenge relates to the impoverishment, loss of livelihood, emotional suffering (fear, pain, indignity) and challenges of adapting to the new circumstances resulting from war and conflicts. Men, women, the elderly, children all have different experiences in conflict and face different threats to their existence and well-being.

This report will discuss the three interrelated elements of protection: physical, social and legal protection. Though sexual violence is perceived as a protection issue, there are reasons to suggest that the concept of sexual violence – arguably a gendered crime – has been ‘ghettoized’ in the sense that the issue is raised in seminars or programmes designed for women, but has not been mainstreamed within the broader debate on addressing wartime violence. Furthermore, as argued by Wood (2008:338), systematic and adequate explanations for sexual violence across time, wars, units and armed groups are visibly absent in the literature. As Gottschall (2004:130) has stated: ‘[scholars] agree that the only way to attack wartime rape is to identify the factors and conditions that promote it.’ Few would argue against the need to end or mitigate sexual violence in armed conflicts, but pinpointing precisely these factors appears difficult. The advocacy literature, policy documents and scholars often hold an overly simplistic view, stating that the motives are ‘opportunistic’ or simply a ‘method of warfare’.

³ From a participant of an induction training course in Kinshasa, DRC, when asked what they understood by ‘gender’ (quoted in Puechguirbal, 2003:113).

Thus, there are many challenges involved in incorporating indicators and methods to combat sexual violence within an often-deficient security sector in conflict or post-conflict countries.

3.1 Challenges to physical protection of civilians

The protection language of the Security Council often employs phrases such as ‘to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence’, where the use of force is one of the elements in mission mandates (Lie & De Carvalho, 2009:14). The protection of civilians and the use of force are often referred to as ‘the protection paradox’ – paradoxical as the best way to stop violence is seen to be to use it. In the context of the DRC, physical protection is made particularly difficult when the majority of reported perpetrators are members of the national army (FARDC). MONUC’s Human Rights Division (in Davis, 2009:12) reported that the FARDC and the PNC stood for a total of 97% (54 % and 43% respectively) of the documented cases of sexual violence between January and June 2007 in the Kivus.⁴ Nevertheless, the mandate of MONUC is based on (1) the protection of civilians and (2) the defeat of FDLR through supporting FARDC, where peacekeepers can employ Chapter VII measures.

The ‘protection paradox’ becomes acutely evident when MONUC put into practice its mandate to protect civilians through military and hence violent measures. As the former deputy special representative of the secretary general (DSRSG) stated: ‘MONUC is a complicated mission due to its dual mandate.’⁵ To exemplify, there is a correlation between increased fighting between MONUC jointly with FARDC against non-state armed groups and increased cases of sexual violence, forced displacement and other violent attacks. This refers especially to the operation Kimia⁶ I and II in North and South Kivu against FDLR-occupied areas through joint FARDC and MONUC collaboration. Seen separately, combating armed opposition and combating sexual violence committed by armed groups are both protection issues. Combined, they seem mutually exclusive as unpaid and frustrated soldiers move through the Congolese villages and attacks civilians indiscriminately. The FARDC are poorly paid, ill-disciplined and further de-professionalized through intermixture with militia groups (Prunier, 2009:337.) There are many reasons for this development, but of particular concern is the *brassage* process of establishing a Congolese army. During the intermediate government between 2003 and 2006, opposition groups from amongst other RCD-Goma, Mayi Mayi and

⁴ Such figures are notoriously difficult to ascertain. For example, they may be double-reported by different NGOs, and the victims do not necessarily know their perpetrators. Nevertheless, the figures indicate a gloomy picture of the actors of the security sector.

⁵ Mountain (2009).

⁶ *Kimia* means ‘silencing’ in Swahili; the operation started in late May 2009.

the former Congolese army FAC were given three months of training and integrated in what was to become the FARDC. But as Boshoff (2004) notes, 'military integration has essentially meant the juxtaposition of the units of the former belligerents under (sometimes merely theoretical) integrated command.' As Turner (2007:131) notes, the brassage process was under-resourced in terms of salaries, food supply and logistics, leaving the civilian population surrounding military camps under great risks of falling prey to grave abuses of human rights. All this has severely affected the possibilities of achieving the SSR goals of creating 'a legitimate, professional and accountable security service providers' (Hutton, 2009:1) to protect civilians.

The Kimia I and II operations have not been a military success, particularly not when seen in relation to the civilian suffering and military losses within the FARDC. In the course of only one month (June 2009) in North Kivu, 100,000 civilians became internally displaced, and reports of sexual violence mushroomed (Yombo, 2009). In total, since the operation started, reports claim that more than 1,000 civilians have killed, 7,000 reported raped, and 900,000 forced from their homes (Rice, 2009).

While armed combat is dealt with as a traditional security issue, sexual violence in practice is often perceived as a 'social' and/or a disciplinary problem and not necessarily a conventional security threat or a protection issue. Rather than dealing with it in terms of security, sexual violence, or more broadly gender-based violence, is seen as addressed most 'successfully' within the framework of medical, social and juridical aspects. To give an example, only 11% of donor contributions against sexual violence has been allocated to the physical protection of civilians in the DRC (MONUC figures represented in HRW, 2009). The importance of the medical, psycho-social and juridical aspects should not be underestimated, but the failure to prevent sexual violence, mass rape and gender-based attacks during war and conflict is a serious security concern.

Taking up the issue of male roles in FARDC training is central to challenge the widespread acceptance of SGBV attacks among the soldiers. Armed personnel should in particular be attuned to addressing male roles, masculinity and their perception as security sector actors in the specific context. And yet, as one women's activist in South Kivu stated: 'Rape is not really perceived as a violation as it is so common.'⁷

Monitoring agencies (see e.g. GAPS, 2009) have identified 'gender training' as a training component of FARDC by the Indian and Paki-

⁷ Interview in Bukavu, 20 November 2009.

stani battalions in MONUC. However, from fieldworks and interviews, it appears that the OGA in MONUC and civilian observers have little or no overview over the content of this training. Few, if any, have sought to measure qualitatively the results from this training, what it contains, how the trainers perceive the concept of gender and how it should be internalized in army training. Even most crucial, perhaps, is how FARDC soldiers perceive the gender training, and how – or rather, if – they go on to act in accordance with the training.

According to the manuals of gender training in SSR, the training should be tailored to the context and should use appropriate expressions (Kleppe, 2008:5). The problems appear to be vast when it comes to the training materials on gender for security sector actors. For one thing, language problems can restrict access for trainers and participants alike. Not only is the lack of translation into non-UN languages a serious concern, but the translations must be adapted to carefully chosen gender-sensitive language. Clarifying the common confusion concerning the meaning of ‘gender’ and ‘women’ would be a first step. The next section will examine gender roles and attitudes more specifically, as this is the fundamental aspect that might be developed into more long-term protection of civilians against SGBV.

3.2 Social protection of civilians: Challenging attitudes

Physical protection is a rather isolated approach to combating SGBV, as it is rarely measures within the realm of actual physical protection that result in less sexual violence against civilians in any country. More often it is the social system and the central role of civil society that can more efficiently regulate or curb SGBV. Decades of war and conflict in the DRC have to some extent disrupted various elements of the social systems that protect people from SGBV. Communities must recognize the many cases of SGBV as a serious internal issue for the DRC, rather than putting the blame solely on foreign armies. Too often during field visits, I heard Congolese civilians (both men and women) argue that the problem is an external one, that it arrived with the foreign militias who entered the DRC in the mid-1990s. On the other hand, it is also the responsibility of the international community to facilitate and implement in their protection mandate a gender-balanced approach to combating SGBV in the DRC.

Little research has been undertaken on the situation of men concerning vulnerability and insecurity. The war and general upheaval has also affected as the traditional male roles, leading to feelings of general disempowerment. Some argue that the on-going low-intensity conflicts in the Great Lakes region, particularly in the eastern DRC, have a specific dynamic referred to as ‘hyper masculinity’ (Myrntinen,

2003:41). 'Hyper masculinity' in this context relates particularly to the concepts of strength, aggressiveness and sexual potency. In this argument, it is not the actual effectiveness of sophisticated weapons (missiles, nuclear power, etc.) for strategically defined targets, but is defined by the readily available small arms and warlordism to (re-)gain social and economic status, especially as a response to social chaos.

The social chaos in the eastern DRC has been caused by the long-term effects of a continental war (in 1996 and from 1998 to 2003), in turn affecting the traditional role of men as protectors and providers of their households and families. Thus it is especially unfortunate, if not counterproductive, when gender continues to be a 'women's only issue'. In the course of the last two decades, men have fallen behind in their traditional roles as protectors and providers. At the same time, women have increasingly entered new social spaces of socio-economic empowerment. While men can often be more directly affected or an active part in warfare and conflict, women continue to perform many of their daily livelihood tasks (fetching water, harvest, go to the markets etc) and thus have a range of survival opportunities. Furthermore, protection of civilian women (and children) is at the heart of the UN mandate, as they are generally seen as innocent victims of the situation. In refugee and displacement camps, aid providers tend to favour women over men, and development projects have a biased gender perception towards designing projects for women in the DRC. These are gender perceptions that are advantageous for neither women nor men. When men fail to live up to traditional expectations, it can in turn lead to violence against parties perceived as weaker due to their inferior positions or status.

The international focus on women in the DRC has encouraged a perception of women as victims and men as perpetrators. What many fail to realize is that joining an armed group or the military might be the only possible solution left for the men in the eastern DRC, especially when other possibilities (such as education and job vacancies) to fulfil their masculine roles are closed. The socialization in these armed groups strongly encourages the use of violence in many forms as an outlet for frustration and empowerment for men, as well as an entry point to earning a basic livelihood and achieving control. Here, the legacy of violence becomes central. Male victims of violence (rape, beatings, pillage etc.) can become perpetrators of violence to re-establish their masculinity by joining an armed group and/or committing acts of domestic violence. Furthermore, having lost status and control over their lives, many men are unable to purchase a wife in the traditional way. Rape and kidnapping of women can instead be the results.

Increasingly, there have been reports that Congolese men are also victims of sexual violence perpetrated by male soldiers. At a sexual violence legal clinic in Goma run by the American Bar Association, male victims comprised 10% of those who reported being raped during the month of June 2009 (Gettleman, 2009). The overwhelming majority are thus still women and girls, but the apparent increase in male victims is a discouraging aspect of the ongoing military operation *Kimia II*. Furthermore, there must be a considerable amount of under-reporting, as male victims of sexual violence tend to come forward only if they have suffered severe medical injuries. Most rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, involving such income-generating activities as basket-weaving, are designed for women and girls, thereby further excluding the men.

3.3 Legal protection of civilians

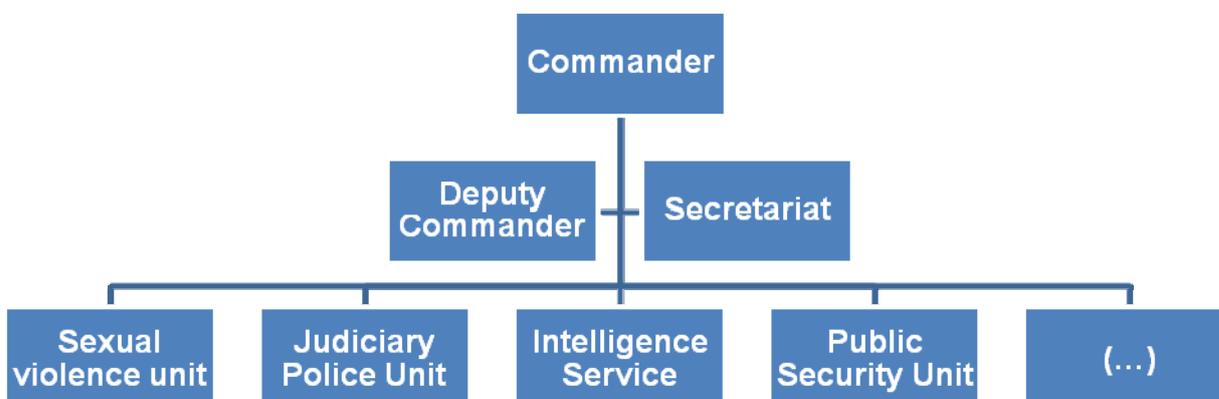
Any effort to discourage high levels of SGBV through reform (DDR, SSR) and seeking to influence destructive attitudes should be accompanied by promoting the legal protection of civilians through the DRC Constitution and international legal frameworks. After all, the DRC is a signatory to and/or has ratified almost every major international, African and UN declaration or resolution concerning women's rights, protection and parity.

The police, as key security actors, are considered to be a core part of any SSR. When a country undergoes the transformation into a post-conflict situation, the military will most likely be downsized, whereas the police force will generally be retained (Smith, 2001:17). Furthermore, the police are responsible for maintaining rule of law, which in turn requires sensitive responses and protection of the members of the communities. DCAF suggests in particular three areas that require attention for police reform:

1. Effective provision of security for men, women, girls and boys
2. Creating a representative and more effective police service
3. Ensuring non-discriminatory and human rights-promoting police institutions and culture

The SSR and sexual violence concept note (*Comprehensive strategy*, 2009:4) and the Stabilization Plan have envisioned specialized anti-sexual violence units, both in the PNC and UNPOL. The work being done today depends largely on the individual efforts of UNPOL and PNC staff in this area, and not systematized through units. According to the Stabilization Plan, such units are to become an integral part of each police unit, complemented by the other units within PNC. Be-

low is the envisioned organizational structure of the territorial police units according to the eastern Stabilization Plan (2003:12):



The units will also be complemented by using referral systems to the various local, national and international (private and public) institutions and organizations working within the psycho-social, medical and justice sectors. As there are already mechanisms in place, notably the Joint Initiative Against SV (UNFPA and others) and the Comprehensive Strategy Against SV, the anti-sexual violence units are seen as an integral approach to combat the high levels of SV in the Kivus.

It is important, however, not to repeat the mistakes made with the establishment of the Women and Children Protection Sections (WACPS) in Liberia. De Carvalho and Schia (2009:1) found that despite often qualified, well-trained and willing police officers, such specialized units were isolating issues that need to be addressed in a more substantial and comprehensive manner. The rule-of-law institutions in the country need to be understood and taken into account in order to understand how traditional versus ‘modern’ justice can interact and function. As one of the interviews from that study explicitly stated, ‘the problem in Liberia is not that victims of rape don’t get justice, but that no one gets justice’ (ibid). This is not exceptional for Liberia, but is a focal point in many conflict and post-conflict settings.

In sum, the PNC in the DRC are not able to conduct their work without a functioning and fair justice sector. In turn, this means that sexual violence units will not have the envisioned effect, as the police are not able to use a referral system with the justice system.

4. Conclusion

The implementers of MONUC face difficult challenges in trying to harmonize PoC in conjunction with a mandate to defeat the remaining FDLR elements through supporting the Congolese army. Moreover, protection needs to be operationalized at a range of different levels if one is to reduce the high number of SGBV attacks, since the best way to protect civilians from these incidents has rarely (if ever) proved to be through the direct use of force or armed personnel. There is an evident need to address the social protection of civilians internally in the DRC, using a more gender-balanced approach.

Two issues in particular should be highlighted. First of all, the gender component of protection has not been taken seriously into account. In fact, UN-supported military operations have proven to have severe implications for the incidence of cases of sexual violence cases towards both men and women. If the transforming roles of men and women in the DRC are not taken up and dealt with properly, then security concerns, protection and future prospects of less predatory behaviour are likely to fail. Second, the international community has failed to offer a gender-equal approach, and have generally neglected men, male roles and contextual vulnerability aspects. If this neglect and impoverishment of Congolese men continues, it cannot but have a destabilizing effect towards the civilian population.

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