

### Box 4.3.1 Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peace Operations

The September 2005 World Summit outcome document urged the UN General Assembly to adopt recommendations made earlier in the year by Prince Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein of Jordan on combating sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by UN peacekeepers. The year 2006 saw the development of a detailed UN strategy toward the problem, alongside an ongoing series of investigations into specific complaints. Between 1 January 2004 and 18 October 2006, investigations were conducted against at least 316 peacekeeping personnel, and these resulted in the summary dismissal of eighteen civilian staff, the repatriation of seventeen members of former police units, and the repatriation or rotation of 144 military personnel (including seven commanders) on disciplinary grounds.

Evidence of the damage SEA can do to the reputation of peacekeeping forces has continued to mount. Surveys of public opinion toward UN operations in Liberia and Burundi carried out by Jean Krasno in early 2006 found that SEA was the biggest single source of resentment toward both missions. In Liberia, 22 percent of those surveyed referred to peacekeepers committing rape or encouraging prostitution. Of 900 Burundian interviewees, 536 referred to SEA, of whom 136 made specific complaints about rapes.

In 2005, the UN General Assembly transferred responsibility for investigating SEA claims to the Office of Internal

Oversight Services (OIOS), outside the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). But Kofi Annan admitted in May 2006 that OIOS lacked the resources to address all cases as they were received, "resulting in a backlog of serious misconduct cases to be investigated." There were 340 allegations of SEA reported in DPKO missions in 2005, and 127 more in the first three-quarters of 2006. Prince Zeid also raised concerns about progress on implementing a strategy for assistance to victims of SEA. Annan presented such a strategy to an expert working group in June 2006, and elements of it were already being implemented by the end of the year.

The strategy proposes that the UN should fine staff members found guilty of SEA, and use the funds to assist victims. Proposed forms of assistance include medical and psychological care, and even basic shelter, clothing, and food. Where necessary, the UN will assist victims in bringing complaints to national authorities, and may finance their legal costs. It will also offer economic reintegration and job training for victims of SEA. The UN will also offer support for paternity suits against UN staff, and aim to ensure that children born as a result of SEA receive support for any diseases transmitted at conception, and for the potential social and economic ramifications of their status. The strategy emphasizes working with community groups and nongovernmental organizations in providing assistance.

DPKO has also worked with the General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping on combating SEA by military and police personnel, over whom DPKO has no direct disciplinary authority. In November 2006, it was reported that DPKO's conduct and discipline team had recorded the repatriation of a variety of uniformed personnel in the previous twelve months, including "12 peacekeepers from Nepal, seven from Uruguay, four from Nigeria, four from Senegal, two from Benin, two from Ethiopia, two from Togo and one each from France, Ghana, India, Niger and South Africa." The Special Committee and DPKO are working on a model memorandum of understanding with personnel contributors, by which states would send national investigations officers to the field to handle accusations of SEA against members of their contingents.

While the General Assembly is still considering these proposals, other organizations are searching for new approaches to SEA. In December 2005 the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) adopted a resolution calling on states to take action against peacekeeping personnel who commit SEA. And in April 2006 the AU launched its first investigation into SEA, following accusations that peacekeepers in Sudan had been involved in sexual abuse.

---

*Sources:* UN docs. A/Res/59/287, A/60/861, A/60/862, and A/60/877; OSCE doc. MC.DEC/16/05; Jean Krasno, *Public Opinion Survey of UNMIL's Work in Liberia* (United Nations, Peacekeeping Best Practices Section, March 2006); Jean Krasno, *Public Opinion Survey of ONUB's Work in Burundi* (United Nations, Peacekeeping Best Practices Section, June 2006); Jonah Fisher, "AU Darfur Troops in Abuse Probe," *BBC News Online*, 4 April 2006; Edith M. Lederer, "180 UN Peacekeepers Face Disciplinary Actions for Sexual Abuse," Associated Press, 30 November 2006.