

UN Peace Operations: What Needs to Change?

International police assistance mandates have changed over the past two decades. Activities have become increasingly wide-ranging and complex, moving from monitoring host State police officers to supporting the reform and restructuring of police organisations. In a few exceptional cases, (most recently Kosovo and Timor-Leste) ‘executive’ police mandates involve substituting for inadequate or absent policing and law enforcement capacity. Both executive and non-executive missions have focused on building capacity of the host State police, a task complicated by weak governance, fragile institutions, community dislocation, rapid urbanisation and transnational criminal groups.

Given the complex environments within which police assistance missions are deployed, a diverse set of skills and knowledge are required to successfully fulfil their mandate; these skills require additional training. It is often assumed that technical experts in fields, such as police investigations, at the national level can be easily deployed to fragile contexts and automatically become a qualified or effective mentor, advisor or even institution builder. In reality, police officers often find this transition difficult, especially when operating in unfamiliar environments, they need additional training in these fields.

Given the complex environment and the focus on improving policing in fragile states, the skill sets required also extend beyond traditional policing capacity. The reform of a country’s system of policing not only focuses on the police institution itself but should also include those who manage (the relevant government ministry) and oversight (internal, external and parliamentary oversight bodies) policing services (some of which may be provided by non-state actors). Police reform is a political as well as technical process. It requires a mix of skills, ranging from financial management to strategic and political process management. At the moment in most bilateral, regional and UN missions, only serving or former police officers are eligible for posts. This severely limits the ability to match mission needs to the required skills. What can be done to create the multi-disciplinary (including civilian capacity) teams required to ensure the right type of support to police assistance missions, and to ensure such support leads to sustainable reforms?

Recognising that most UNPOL officers come from member states that themselves might have policing challenges requires a recognition that UN deployments are, simultaneously, both assistance missions and a means to develop PCC policing capacity. There is a strong argument to improve *in-mission training* to enable officers to develop and master the skills they need for the post, whilst on mission. Access to in-service training on ‘how to be an effective advisor’ or on ‘police reform in challenging environments or on ‘police reform within an SSR context’ would enable officers to better position their experience within the missions mandate. This would require a re-think of UN pre-deployment training, induction and in-service training. It should also be recognised that such capacity building activities would have benefits—for individual UNPOL officers and their home force—beyond the immediate peacekeeping mission.

Make sure we learn and adapt our approach over time. Given the time it takes to fully understand the context in which we are working and to become fully operational, the

tendency is to continue the work and approach of your predecessor. So in effect the mission could be doing the same things, each year for ten years, without adapting its approach to the changing political, security and capacity circumstances. UN missions need internal means of gathering lessons and providing advice for police components. The UN's standing police capacity could play a greater role in auditing police components, gathering lessons and becoming a knowledge hub in international police support.

Proposals

- 1) **Induction Training** – roll out new induction training (developed and tested in Liberia) across UN peacekeeping missions, together with a means to ensure that the training quality and approach is maintained. This training focused on understanding the mandate, the national context, the role of UNPOLs and how to be an effective advisor.
- 2) **In-Service Training** – recognise the need for in-service training within peacekeeping missions, to better build the requisite skills of UN officers to fulfil their mandates.
- 3) **Including more civilian capacity** – adapt human resource regulations to enable more civilians to service in UNPOL components, to focus on the political/governance issues.
- 4) **UNPOC** – continue to update and adapt the current UNPOC courses. Recognising the need to expand the number of countries running UNPOC training, consideration should be given to developing a system to twin those PCCs without UNPOC training with those that have a well established system in order to build their capacity to run UNPOC courses;
- 5) **Match skills to mission requirements** – develop specific job descriptions for UNPOL posts, to ensure recruitment fulfils specific tasks;
- 6) **Reinforce the Standing Police Capacity as an audit, knowledge hub** – develop the role of the Standing Police Capacity to a) undertake audits of police components; b) enhance planning for missions; c) act as a repository of knowledge and guidance.

Input by:

- Tor Tanke Holm, Deputy Director of the Norwegian Police University College and
- Mark Downes, Assistant Director DCAF and Head of the International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT)