

Nonprofit Ethical Case:

Culture of Impunity in the United Nations Peacekeeper Operations

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Summary



- Over 2,000 young women and children have alleged to have been victims of UN peacekeepers since the early 1990s. But only a small fraction of those they have accused have been held accountable.
- The UN has recorded only 53 uniformed peacekeepers and one civilian that have been sent to jail for these crimes.

[Illustration by Jawahir Al-Naimi/Al Jazeera]

Media Coverage



FRONTLINE documentary about the UN Sex Abuse Scandal



Video by the UN that shows how they prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse by its personnel

Facts

Bosnia & Cambodia

In Bosnia in the 1990s, peacekeepers were accused of soliciting sex from women who had been trafficked and virtually enslaved in local brothels.

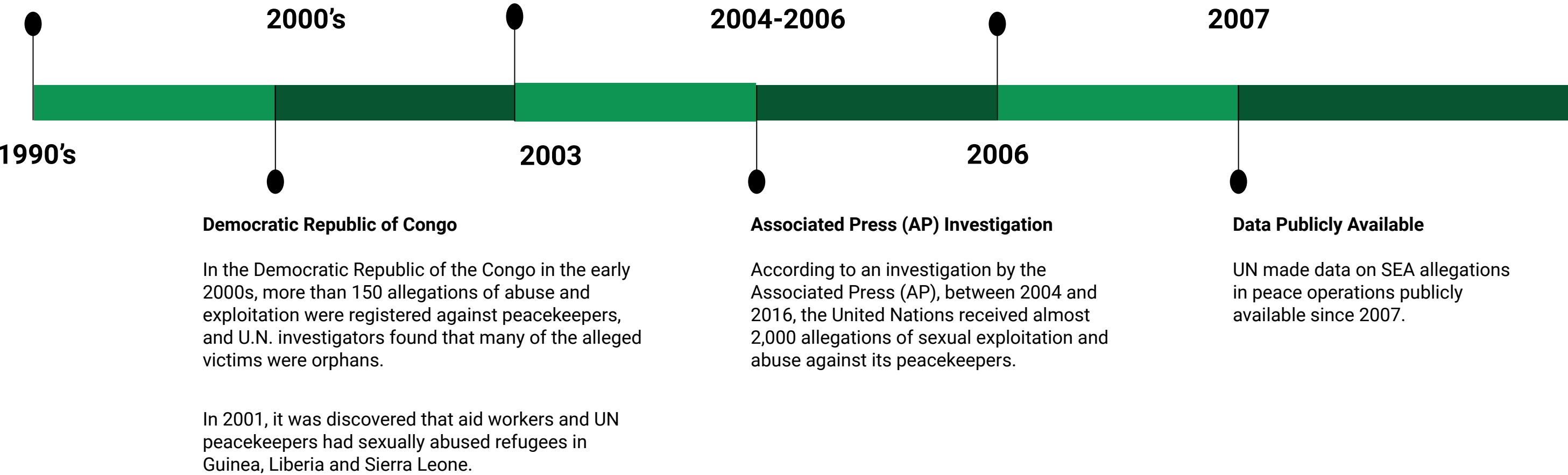
When several international aid agencies raised the alarm over abusive behaviour by UN peacekeepers in Cambodia between 1991 and 1993, including them visiting brothels where some of the prostitutes were underage, Yasushi Akashi, the then head of the UN mission to Cambodia (UNTAC), responded, "boys will be boys".

UN's Zero Tolerance Policy

The UN creates a zero tolerance policy with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse.

UN Starts Tracking Cases

Record-keeping and data tracking of allegations of misconduct and subsequent actions started in 2006.



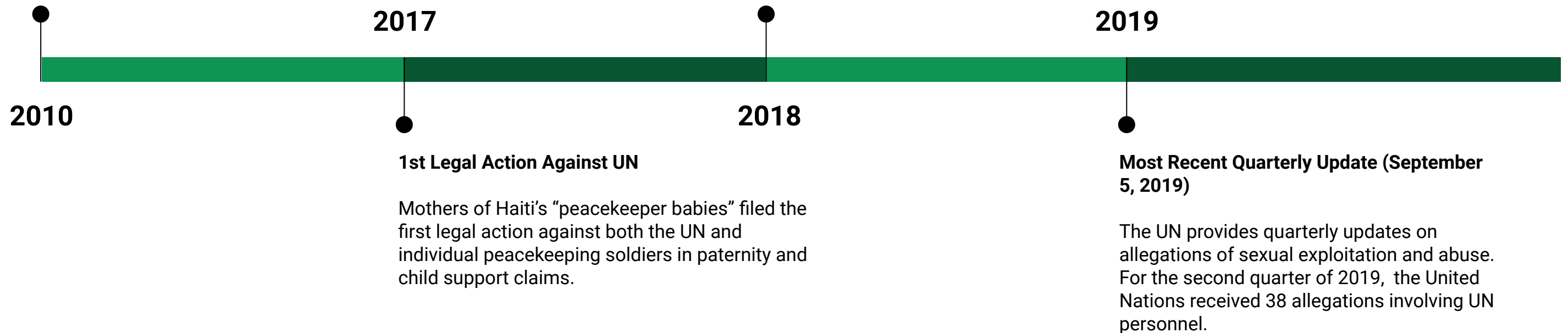
Facts

Cholera outbreak in Haiti

Peacekeepers' involvement in the country's 2010 cholera outbreak and sex abuse scandals as evidence. The source of the waterborne disease, which killed more than 9,000 people, was traced to a UN base.

UN Statement Release

On July 30, 2018, a statement is released on the UN Peacekeeping website that states that the UN received 70 new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in a period of three months, and 18 of these cases involved peacekeeping operations.

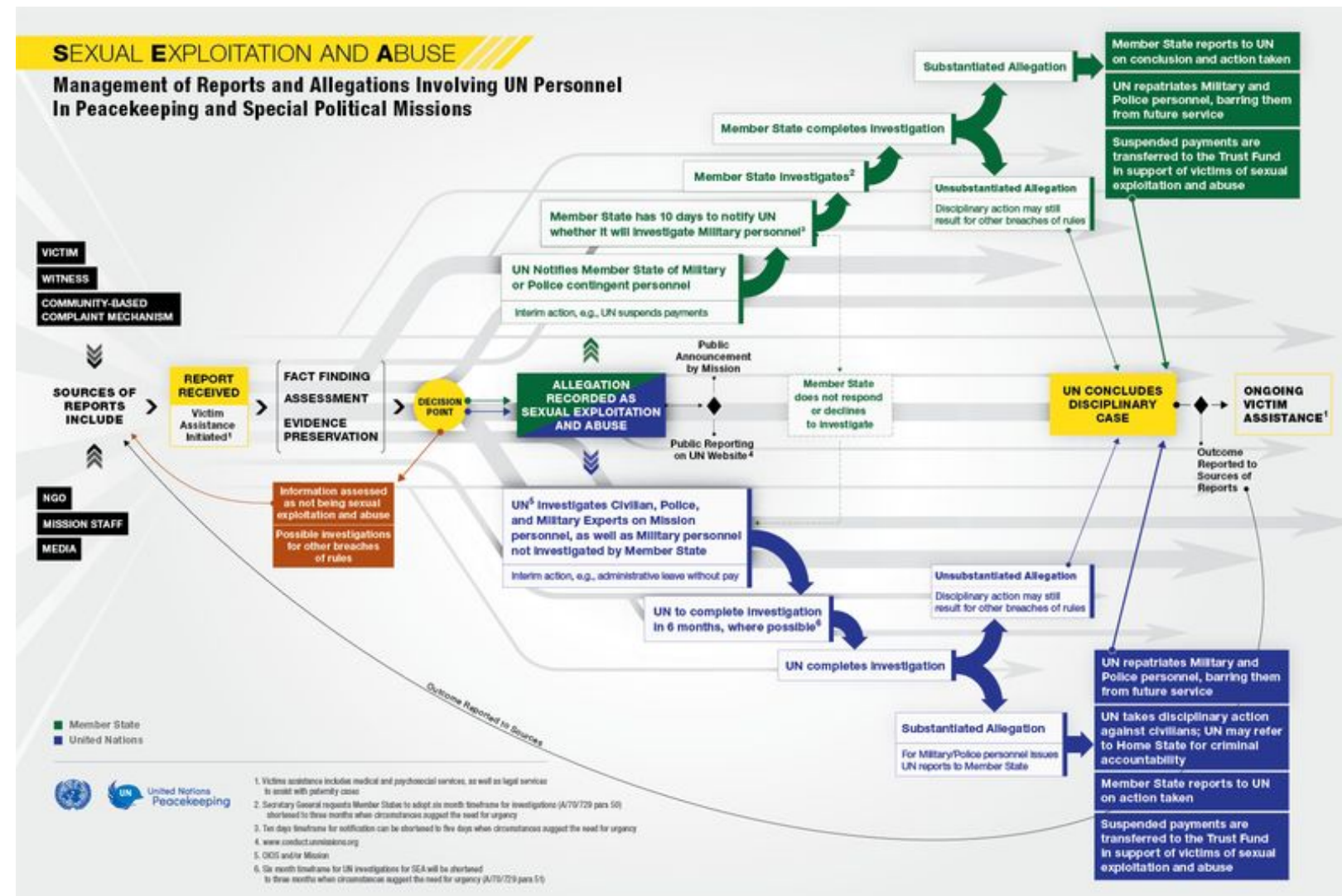


Compliance

“The problem of sexual exploitation and abuse is either an ongoing or potential problem in every single one of our missions.”

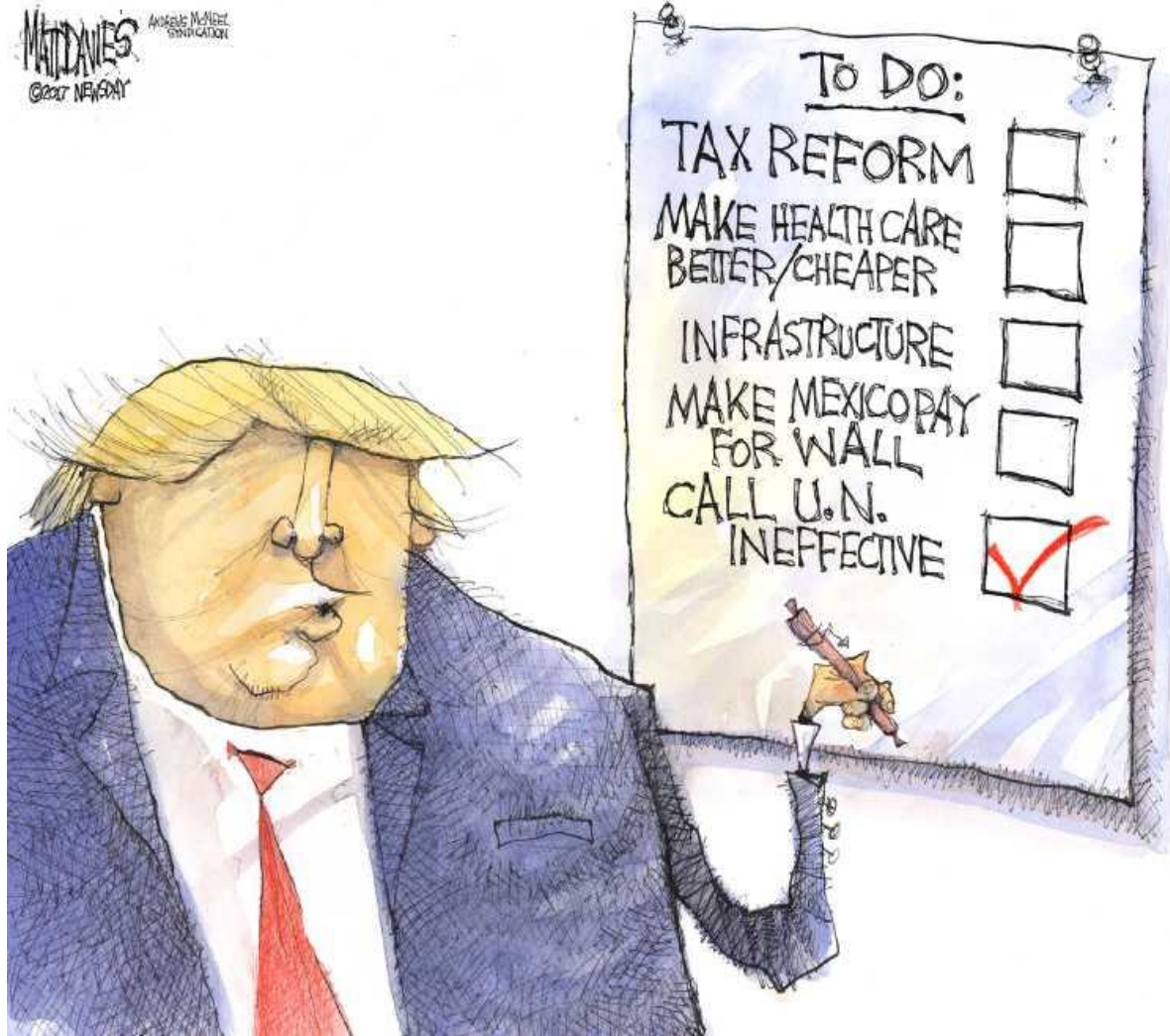
- Jane Holl Lute, UN Special Coordinator, Victims Rights

- UN has been in existence since **1945**, but record-keeping and data tracking of allegations of misconduct only started in **2006**
- UN **investigates its own staff**
- Disciplinary sanctions and any other judicial actions remain the responsibility of the national jurisdiction of the individual involved, as the UN does not have the authority or a legal mandate to criminally prosecute individuals
- 3 pronged strategy to address misconduct:
 - **Prevention**
 - **Enforcement of UN Standards of Conduct**
 - **Remedial Action**
- “Zero - Tolerance Policy”



Standards of Conduct Infographic, peacekeeping.un.org

Systemic Responsibility



Cartoon by Matt Davies, Journal News

- ★ Systems are supposed to be both **effective** and **efficient** for the highest utility of the user of the system
- ★ The UN's systemic responsibility is **to protect** (R2P)
- ★ **Maintain international peace and security**
 - Protection = responsibilities of the state;
 - International assistance and capacity-building;
 - Timely and decisive response
- ★ **R2P vs. Humanitarian intervention**
- ★ **Role of IGO = international legal personality**

Individual Responsibility

- Per the UN Standards of Conduct, all personnel should:
 - Respect local laws, customs and practices
 - Treat host country inhabitants with respect, courtesy and consideration
 - Act with impartiality, integrity and tact
- The implications that come with being the largest & most visible representation of the UN
- What we do - “Promoting women”

“We work to ensure women’s priorities are central to peace and security decisions at all levels. To achieve this goal, we address social, cultural and political barriers and protection risks that limit women’s full participation in achieving and sustaining peace.”



Organizational Responsibility

- *“We can’t just put a blue helmet on them and assume their mindset will change overnight.”*
-Onanga-Anyanga (Veteran U.N. official from Gabon)
- Culture of Impunity
- Dehumanisation of the host population
- Approximately 105,000 peacekeepers are deployed and roughly 3,700 military personnel and 1,200 police are women



[Illustration by Jawahir Al-Naimi/Al Jazeera]

Stakeholders Analysis

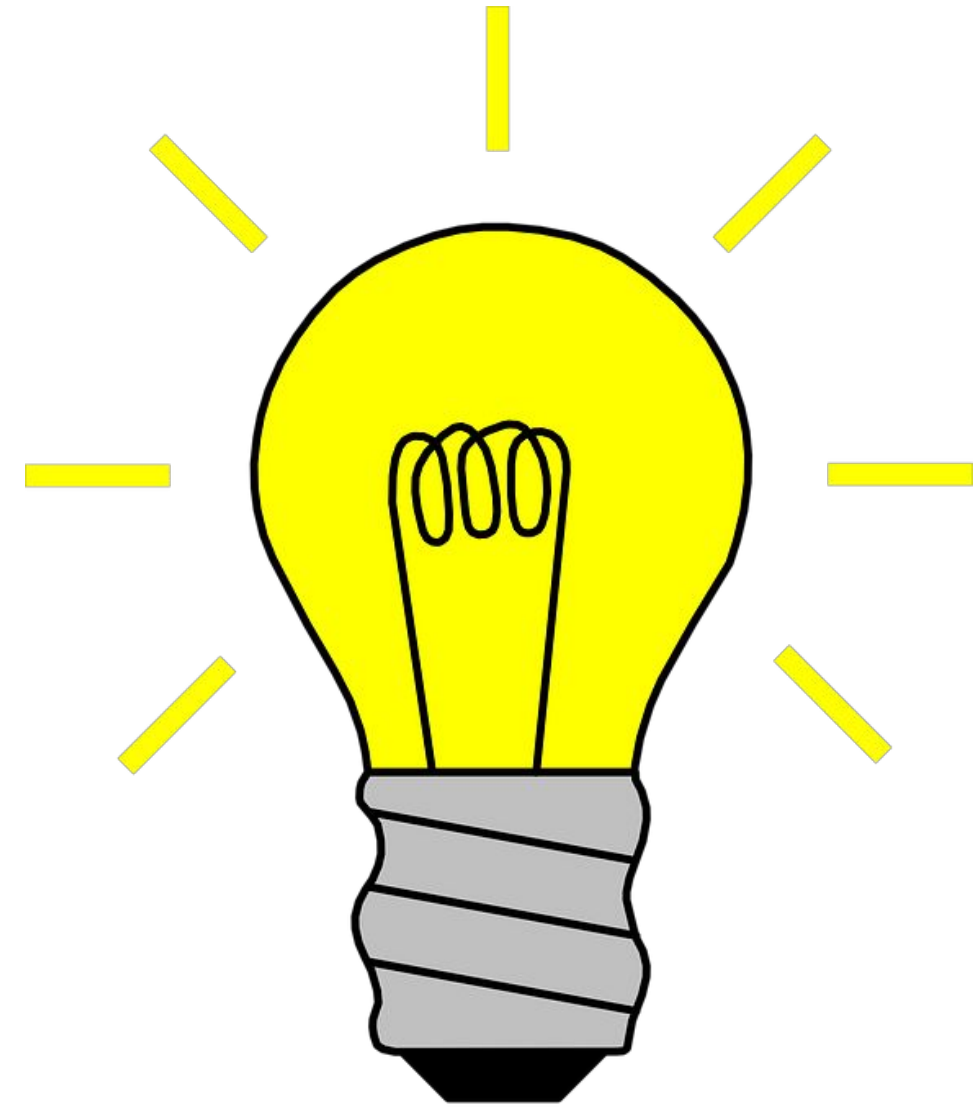


- The community first saw the peacekeepers as a sign of security, proof that the world hadn't forgotten about them.
- Peacekeeper operations leave behind a distorted economy in which young women have been making their livelihoods by selling sex.
- Peacekeepers babies (public shames, long-term financial impact on the community)

[Illustration by Jawahir Al-Naimi/Al Jazeera]

Alternative Solutions

- ❖ Recruiting and deploying more women in the field
- ❖ Requires us to critically look at the patriarchal system and analyze our perception of whom is capable of peacekeeping, military force, security, and containment
- ❖ Only 22% of 16,507 civilians are women
- ❖ Trainings in all capacity need to focus more on the root which is about abuse and power rather than the sexual acts themselves



Questions

- ❑ What training should Peacekeepers receive before participating in UN operations?
- ❑ Do you think Peacekeeping operations are a contradictory notion? Should they exist?
- ❑ The UN leaves the adjudication of sexual abuse allegations to the troops' countries of origin. But those nations' investigations are often weak. What can the UN do to change the culture of impunity in peacekeeping operations?
- ❑ How can we realize systems change when systems are reinforced by their symbiotic relationship within and to other systems?
- ❑ Does social power reside in every individual?
- ❑ Following the idea that “even the guardians should be guarded,” should there be a separate governing body that only holds UN peacekeepers responsible (i.e. ICC)?

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