

*“(The Security Council) calls upon the Secretary-General to initiate, in collaboration with Member States, a revised strategy, within existing resources, to double the numbers of women in military and police contingents of UN peacekeeping operations over the next five years” – Resolution 2242 (2015)*



## The UN Women Female Military Officers Course - Increasing the deployment of women in peacekeeping operations

### CONTEXT

Women’s participation in the military component of peace operations has been recognized as a critical factor contributing to mission success, both in the United Nations (UN) normative frameworks on peacekeeping and women, peace and security, including several Security Council resolutions, as well as by commanders on the ground themselves.

Women peacekeepers broaden the range of skills and capacities among all categories of personnel, enhance the operational effectiveness of all tasks, and improve the mission’s image, accessibility and credibility vis-à-vis the local population. For example, female military officers are in great demand to staff Joint Protection Teams, Military Observer/Liaison Teams, drive strong civil-military coordination, and together with civilian and police counterparts can more effectively reach out to and interact with civilians in the host country. They are seen as less threatening and more accessible to affected populations, and particularly women and girls who prefer to communicate with female military and police officers. Targeted outreach to women in host communities is particularly needed to capitalize on their familiarity with local protection strategies and patterns of attack that affect women and girls, interact with survivors of gender-based violence, and screen women in disarmament and demobilization sites.

And yet, an extremely low number of female military personnel are deployed in current peacekeeping missions. At the end of 2014, only three percent of the military component of missions were women, and the majority of these were employed as support staff. This percentage

had barely increased in the past two decades, despite repeated calls for more women in peacekeeping since UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. For example, as of November 2014 there were only 69 female military experts on mission (3.9 percent of the total) deployed in the UN’s 16 peacekeeping operations. This makes it very difficult to involve women in protection tasks, early warning, or community outreach.



UN Women course at the Centre for UN Peacekeeping in Delhi, April 2015

### THE COURSE

In 2015, UN Women piloted a two-week technical course – the Female Military Officers Course (FMO) - in India and South Africa exclusively for female military officers. This was an innovative and unprecedented activity that aimed at providing a space for exposure, visibility, and opportunities for professional advancement, to military women from all over the world; encouraging the preparation and deployment of female military officers for UN peacekeeping operations and providing them with the technical skills demanded by commanders on the ground; increasing the pool of female military

officers that could be made available to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) for deployment to a UN mission in short notice, for example as UN Military Observers or Military Liaison Officers, as well as to UN headquarters; engaging with troop contributing countries (TCC) to incentivize the deployment of more women in their military contingents, and particularly for protection-related tasks; and supporting the strategic objective of the Office of the Military Advisor of the DPKO to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming in missions.

Since then, the course has been hosted by China and Kenya, and once again by India in 2016, and India and China again in 2017. A further course is planned for November 2017 in Kenya, and three courses more have been scheduled for 2018. Over 240 military women have now completed this training. Of note, since the introduction of the FMOC, the percentage of female Military Experts to missions has doubled from **3.6 percent in 2014 to 7.5 percent in 2017**.

The courses were enthusiastically endorsed by the participants, positively reviewed by an evaluation team, and extensively featured in media outlets, including [The Guardian](#), [African Independent](#), [Christian Science Monitor](#), [The Sunday Times](#), [The Daily Maverick](#), [Xinhua News](#), [Getty](#), [Japan Defense Focus](#), Australia's [Navy Daily](#), China's [Ministry of Defense](#), [YouTube](#), and others. UN Women's own articles about the trainings can be read [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), as well as a [video message](#) from UN Women's Executive Director.



With an emphasis on scenario-based and role-playing exercises, the range of skills and knowledge that the participants are trained on include communication techniques to interact with victims and address intimate or sensitive information;

civil-military coordination; knowledge about the nature, physical and psychological consequences of violence against women in peacekeeping theaters, including sexual violence; knowledge of mandates and operational guidance on women, peace and security; early warning signs of conflict-related sexual violence; information/intelligence gathering to identify risks, threats, and vulnerabilities; knowledge of child protection; how to operate in mixed military teams and with civilian colleagues from relevant components of the mission; service referrals for female survivors; and community outreach and expectations management; interview and screening techniques; and knowledge of gender-responsive peacekeeping in general.

The instructors' team is a combination of military and civilian men and women led by a retired General with experience in multiple peacekeeping operations. UN Women, through the Military Advisors of the Permanent Missions to the UN, sends a call for nominations to participants from major TCC from all over the world. Candidates must be interested in and eligible for deployment in peace operations. Each course takes a maximum of 40 participants, and UN Women sponsors all the costs of the participation of candidates from the Global South, which represent a large majority of the largest TCC. The Chief of the Force Generation Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is invited to visit the course and communicate directly with the Permanent Missions of the participants on their future deployments.

The following FMOC are scheduled for 2018:

- 1) FMOC 9 - New, Delhi India 9-20 April 2018;
- 2) FMOC10 - Beijing, China 30 July-10 Aug 2018;
- and
- 3) FMOC11 - Nairobi, Kenya 12-23 Nov 20-18.

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