



UN-INSTRAW Report on

**Attracting and Retaining Professional Women in
Logistics Support for UN Peacekeeping Operations**

Executive Summary

December 2006

This report was prepared by UN-INSTRAW at the request of the Logistics Support Division of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Thanks go to the consultants, Gwendolyn Beetham and Kristen Timothy.

Executive Summary

The Logistics Support Division (LSD) of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is encountering significant challenges in efforts to find qualified professional women for logistics support to UN peacekeeping operations. This report, commissioned by LSD and undertaken by the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW), addresses these challenges by:

- Exploring possible barriers to recruiting and retaining women professionals;
- Identifying best practices of other field-oriented entities that recruit staff for comparable tasks;
- Finding new ways to attract more women from the outside to take up typically male-dominated jobs in logistics support in LSD at New York Headquarters;
- Proposing a set of practical low-cost means to increase the pool of female candidates applying for advertised posts.

Considerable momentum exists at the present time for hiring more women. In November 2006, Under-Secretary-General Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno issued the Departmental policy on gender equality in UN Peacekeeping Operations. Ms. Jane Holl Lute, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Office of Mission Support, has directed that every effort should be made by LSD managers to encourage women to apply and to show evidence that women candidates are being given full and equal consideration. This top down push for more women professionals has resulted in closer attention to achieving the 50/50 goal for gender balance in the UN Secretariat mandated by the General Assembly and to similar goals set out in Security Council resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security*.

In this report, UN-INSTRAW presents the findings of a desk review of DPKO personnel policies and a survey of current LSD recruitment practices and attitudes regarding women candidates carried out through individual interviews and focus groups. Current approaches to recruitment are examined from a gender perspective and the results of on-line research to identify global networks and publications that have the potential to reach professional women qualified in logistics support, are presented. To demonstrate the consistency of the study's findings with current personnel reform proposals and studies on gender balance, comparisons are drawn with the proposals before the General Assembly in the Secretary-General's report *Investing in People* (A/61/255 and Add.1), as well as in the report on *Improvement of the Status of Women in the UN System* (A/61/318).

Meeting the growing need for civilian peacekeeping personnel

DPKO as a whole faces a unique set of challenges in recruiting the growing number of civilians, men and women, required for its peacekeeping operations. At the end of October 2006, UN peacekeeping deployment reached an historic high with 80,976 military and police personnel and some 15,000 civilians serving in peace operations (includes peacekeeping and special political missions) around the world. While the bulk of DPKO's peacekeeping activities are field-based, there is also a relatively small cadre of DPKO staff based at New York Headquarters who coordinate field operations. The Logistics Support Division, which constitutes about half of DPKO's Office of Mission Support (OMS) at Headquarters, and 40 per cent of DPKO as a whole, had a total of 126 authorized posts at the Professional level and above as of October 2006. The number of women professionals in LSD at HQ has

remained static over the past few years; women professionals make up 17.4 per cent today compared to 17 per cent in 2003.

This compares to the 48.1 per cent women at Headquarters in DPKO as a whole, of which 33 per cent were professionals and above and 29 per cent were at the D1 level and above at end December 2005. Clearly logistics support poses particular challenges in attracting women since many of the skills needed are in historically male-dominated professions.

Where are the women

A persistent low level of female applicants for posts in logistics is the result of many factors, but one that stands out in this study is the composition of today's labor force in the field of logistics, where women are relatively new entries. In most parts of the world, women tend to choose logistics support as a profession in lesser numbers than men often because women face greater challenges in making successful careers in this field.

At the same time, women are entering military and police forces in greater numbers than in the past, and are finding increasing opportunities to develop skills in logistics. In science, engineering and technology, for example, an important trend is the increasing number of women graduates from developing countries, especially in parts of Asia and in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, a number of academic institutions are including logistics training as part of their global business curricula.

Women and the current UN staff selection system

The staff selection system introduced in 2002 is an open system that aims at greater transparency and relies on Galaxy, an electronic recruitment tool, to inform staff members and outside candidates of immediate and anticipated vacancies and to receive applications. Galaxy generates many more applicants than the previous system and is largely passive not proactive. In the occupational category, logistics, the number of female applicants received through Galaxy is very low and the current system does not entail any formal targeted outreach to potential applicants. The practice of LSD is to look to field missions to find staff for its New York office where there are also few women in logistics.

What women in logistics expect

The study examined potential barriers to female recruitment in LSD, including the importance of the work culture in peacekeeping for attracting women applicants. Interviews with LSD staff revealed a number of frustrations that are shared by women and a new generation of younger male recruits. These include: tensions around balancing work and family life, instability of contracts, lack of career opportunities and on-the-job training, little mobility across occupations, and in some cases, relatively non-competitive benefit packages compared to for-profit organizations and certain NGOs working in conflict zones. While women and men alike said they do not wish to see "token" women hired, they acknowledged that proactive steps were needed in order to improve gender balance.

Experience of other field-oriented UN entities

For purposes of comparison, experiences of other field-oriented UN entities, especially those engaged in emergency or conflict zones, were examined by UN-INSTRAW, including the number of women employed in logistics, and their strategies for female recruitment. Considered were UNHCR, WFP, the Logistics Center, IAPSO/UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF. Evidence suggests that these entities face many of the same challenges as LSD in recruiting

professional women with logistics skills and suggests that there is potential for greater sharing of information about female candidates, of recruitment strategies, and for rotating logistics staff among agencies.

Outreach to women qualified in logistics support

An important feature of the present study was to identify ways to reach out to pools of qualified women professionals within and outside the United Nations who are qualified in the various areas of logistics support required by LSD.

Technological advances have changed the way people throughout the world receive and exchange information and offer new ways to reach qualified women and men worldwide. In this context, the Internet has evolved as a meeting ground for employers and prospective employees. UN-INSTRAW therefore explored the potential for using the Internet for global outreach to women with expertise in logistics.

The study examined a number of strategies used by recruiters for conducting targeted global recruitment outreach that can be applied in the search for female candidates for LSD:

- Increasing overall visibility of opportunities in LSD/DPKO among women professionals
- Targeting internet sites that specifically reach women in the logistics field
- Advertising via print media and radio
- Distributing information about LSD/DPKO at professional conferences and job fairs
- Using country specific sites/outreach

UN-INSTRAW, in undertaking Internet research, devoted particular attention to sites that are likely to reach women professionals from un- and under-represented countries. In addition, cost-effective websites that reach the largest targeted audience were prioritized.

Over 100 networks were identified by these searches. They are divided into seven categories: UN-specific; Women's networks; Humanitarian aid NGOs and press; Universities, training centres, and institutes; Recruitment/Staffing services; Select print publications and radio; and Conferences and job fairs. Descriptions of the sites and follow-up actions to be taken in each category can serve as a guide for establishing contact with each organization, institution, association, or media outlet.

Recommendations

Recommendations arising from the study are divided into immediate actions and longer-term follow up by LSD in its campaign to recruit and retain more professional women in positions at Headquarters. The immediate actions include:

- *A pilot project on targeted outreach to women candidates and tracking and monitoring of results;*
- *Increased publicity specifically on opportunities for women in logistics support to peacekeeping;*
- *Continued leadership for positive action on gender balance, and*
- *More active use of UN system information-sharing networks and mobility policies to identify and recruit women working in logistics elsewhere in the UN system.*

The priority areas that the present study identifies for longer term LSD follow-up include:

- *Gender-sensitive recruitment practices,*

- *Improved career development and training, and*
- *Increased sensitivity to issues of work/life balance.*

These longer term issues are consistent with those identified in a number of studies and reports prepared on the factors that explain the slow movement toward gender balance in the United Nations Secretariat and in *Investing in People*, the recent report by the Secretary-General on personnel reform.

Conclusions

UN-INSTRAW commends the Logistics Support Division for its initiative to implement a campaign to recruit more women professionals. The continued commitment of senior leadership in LSD in this regard is critical to achieving the goal. Also important is a growing recognition by line managers of the significant role they themselves can play in diversifying the workforce with more women.

Targeted outreach with effective tracking through a wide set of networks, publications, and the media offers opportunities to reach untapped pools of qualified women and contribute to greater awareness and interest on the part of professional women in the work of LSD. Changes in the work culture and conditions of service including greater sensitivity to issues like work/life balance, stability of contracts, and opportunities for training would also be a major step forward.