

11.2 Training

In complex emergency situations requiring the involvement of UN operations, the importance of appropriate training for all field personnel can never be over-estimated. Various UN field operation components or agencies already undergo relatively extensive training. Military peace-keepers in particular receive substantial training for peace-keeping operations, and are rapidly evolving even more peace-keeping specific training ²²⁵ in recognition that general combat training alone is not sufficient. Various UN specialized agencies such as UNHCR have also developed training for its field personnel, and continue to enlarge and refine this training.

Unfortunately there has been a belated recognition that there is a similar need for substantial training for human rights operation (HRO) personnel. Some recent operations have highlighted the potential for wasted effort, and even harmful action, by human rights officers who are not trained for field operations. Even more belated is the recognition that others in UN operations like political affairs officers, military or CIVPOL, need human rights operations training as well. So far "there is very little evidence that the issue of training with respect to human rights and criminal justice principles is being taken seriously by Member States or by the UN." ²²⁶

The potential tasks for HROs and HRO field partners are both numerous and extremely complicated. They require in-depth skills and knowledge of a variety of issues including international human rights law and the law of armed conflict, how the UN and its field operations function, and the social, legal, and political situation in the operation area. The increasing complexity of HROs and their tasks, demands a broad variety of personnel with an even broader variety of skills. This in turn requires enhanced skills on how to manage such diverse teams and coordinate with human rights field partners both UN and non-UN.

Training is an essential tool in developing such skills. Simply putting people into field positions and expecting them to pick up skills as they go along, is a legitimate method of developing skilled personnel. However, such an approach is never sufficient in any profession, and becomes particularly problematic in situations of human rights violations where mistakes can have tragic and irreversible impact.

11.2.1 Past HRO training

The type of and degree of training received by personnel for past UN HROs has varied widely. For both UNTAC and ONUSAL, training for human rights personnel appears to have been almost non-existent. Similarly, the earlier UN personnel on HRFOR received no training, and the European Union training for the personnel it selected for HRFOR consisted of one to two

²²⁵ For a discussion of some of these evolving military training requirements see pp. 50-61, LaRose-Edwards, Dangerfield & Weekes, *Non-Traditional Military Training for Canadian Military in Preparation for Peacekeeping*, Report and Recommendations for the Commission of Inquiry Into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia, Ottawa, December 1995.

²²⁶ p.45, *Peace-keeping and Human Rights*, Amnesty International, IOR/40/01/94, January 1994.