

PEACEKEEPERS AS ALLIES IN TACKLING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT



An evaluation report on the impact of training of
Uganda Battle Groups (UGABAG) on the
*International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of
Sexual Violence in Conflict*
2016-2019





Photo 1: Group photo after the 2019 evaluation with participants showing certificates obtained during the training in 2018

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List of Acronyms

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
FOB	Forward Operating Base
CA	Crimes of Aggression
CAH	Crimes Against Humanity
CG	Crimes of Genocide
CIMIC	Civil Military Co-operation
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FET	Female Engagement Team
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
FOB	Forward Operating Base
ICL	International Criminal Law
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OJT	On-the-job Training
OPD	Outpatient Department
PSVI	Prevention of Sexual Violence Initiative
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RLP	Refugee Law Project
ROE	Rules of Engagement
S/SGT	Staff Sergeant
SNA	Somali National Army
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
SV	Sexual Violence
SVC	Sexual Violence in Conflict
ToT	Trainer of Trainers
UGABAG	Uganda Battle Group
UN	United Nations
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Forces
UTI	Urinary Tract Infections
WC	War Crimes
WO1/2	Warrant Officer 1/2

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The Uganda People's Defence Force, in particular the Peace Support Operation Training Centre - Singo, engaged consistently and proactively in the delivery of the trainings, as well as enabling the evaluation process that led to this report. We are particularly grateful to all members of the UPDF who shared their experiences with the evaluation team.

Chris Dolan (Director), Onen David (Programme Manager), Wokorach Mogi (SGBVP Officer), Gabriel Ochieng (Legal Officer) and Winnifred Agabo (Training Coordinator) actively participated during the evaluation process and input on the report, and Francis Okot Oyat (Social Worker/Counsellor), as well as facilitating a Focus Group Discussion, provided additional support in the design and entry of data using SPSS.

Financial and logistical support were provided by Walter Richard Alier (Head of Operations and Programme Support), Grace Nakulira (Finance Manager), Shantah Namirembe (Human Resources Officer), and Nyende Leticia (Logistics and Procurement Assistant).

Onen David Ongwech was the primary author of this report, with technical guidance, edits, and final sign-off by Ms. Devota Nuwe (Head of Programmes), Walter Richard Alier (Head of Operations and Programme Support) and Dr Chris Dolan (Director).

Foreword

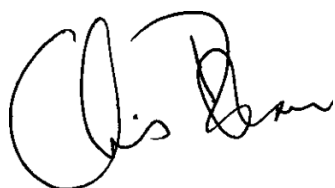
When peacekeepers turn out to be perpetrators their credibility and their capacity to deliver on their promise to keep the peace is severely eroded. Instances of this have been seen around the world again and again in recent decades.

When on the other hand peacekeepers are equipped to understand, respond to and prevent some of the dynamics that can destabilise an often fragile peace, then their value is greatly enhanced in post-conflict situations. This is particularly the case if they are able to engage pro-actively on issues of conflict-related sexual violence and its 'post-conflict' manifestations in the form of sexual exploitation and abuse.

As Refugee Law Project, therefore, we are proud to have been able to benefit from the support of the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office from 2016 - 2019 to train multiple deployments to Somalia of Ugandan Peacekeepers under the Uganda People's Defence Forces.

The fourth grant in the series catered for post-deployment evaluation discussions with returned peacekeepers who had benefited from Refugee Law Project's trainings on the *International Protocol for the Documentation & Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict*. This report reflects those evaluation discussions.

The report offers testimony to the value of such training endeavours, as well as to the importance of the *International Protocol* as a guiding document around which to organise both the content and the process. The report also makes a number of important recommendations about how future trainings can be further strengthened, as well as measures that can be taken in conjunction with trainings to strengthen their impact during actual deployments of peacekeepers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Dolan', with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Dr Chris Dolan
Director, Refugee Law Project

1. Introduction

Sexual violence in conflict remains one of the major challenges confronting many governments, media, researchers, humanitarian and development workers globally. Although it is a battle far from over, commendable successes have been recorded in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence, especially in the areas of legislative and policy reforms.

Politically, many countries have embraced best practices to respond to and prevent sexual violence through financial, technical, and material support to victims. In 2014, the United Kingdom convened a ground-breaking Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict¹. Using the famous #TimeToAct hashtag aimed at forging workable approaches to ending sexual violence during conflicts, it brought together over 900 ‘experts’ from over 120 countries.¹ In 2014, Rt Hon William Hague MP said;

“We believe the time has come to end the use of rape in war once and for all, and we believe it can be done”².

Despite increased research, policy, and legal documents on sexual violence, many of which call for fighting impunity against sexual violence, several hurdles remain. Prosecution of sexual violence in conflict remains a challenge due to lack of quality documentation and evidence, and this in turn reflects the need for deeper understanding of the nature, context, forms, and consequences of sexual violence, as set out in The Hague Principles on Sexual Violence.³

During the 2014 UK summit, the 1st Edition of the *International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict* was launched. The 2nd Edition was published in 2017. The Protocol seeks to be a best practice document aimed at supporting quality documentation and investigation. Since the release of the first edition of the protocol, it has been used to train a number of stakeholders in Uganda on documentation and investigation of sexual violence.

While an increasing number of stakeholders have embraced the need for quality documentation and investigations of cases of sexual violence in conflict, engaging the military on the same has yet to gain momentum in many countries. The need to enhance military and peacekeeping capabilities was recommended during the 2014 Global Summit through *“empowering peacekeepers with required skills and capabilities to prevent and intervene actively where sexual violence is occurring as part of their wider responsibility under a Protection of Civilian mandate”*.

1

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390742/PSVI_post_summit_report_Online2.pdf

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretarys-remarks-at-the-opening-of-the-global-summit-fringe--2>

³ These can be found at <https://4genderjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/MASTER-DOC-The-Hague-Principles-on-Sexual-Violence.pdf>

At the Summit, Uganda's Minister for Internal Affairs, Hon. Minister Henry Okello Oryem, pledged to provide training for armed forces on the Protocol. Since 2016, with funding support from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office through the British High Commission in Uganda, Refugee Law Project has trained Uganda Battle Groups (UGABAG) peacekeepers on documentation and investigations of sexual violence in conflict using the protocol. So far, 1,088 (229 females, 859 males) UPDF soldiers have received training prior to deployment for peacekeeping operation in the East and Horn of Africa region.

2. Summary of RLP's training with Uganda Battle Group (UGABAG)

2.1. Objectives of UGABAG training

The objectives of the training are to:

- 1.1. Equip UGABAG peacekeepers with knowledge of the *International Protocol on Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict* (SVC) so as to positively impact on their attitude to provide quality, compassionate, non-discriminatory and timely prevention and response services to victims and survivors of sexual violence such as refugees, asylum seekers, deportees, unaccompanied minors and IDPs within their countries of deployment and districts of operation.
- 1.2. Improve the capacity and skills of UGABAG commanders to transfer knowledge ideas, rules, and standards learnt in the training to credible documentation, investigations, prevention, best court practices, individual respect and social justice that apply to the rest of Ugandans and countries of deployment when responding to sexual violence cases, as well as related mental health and psychosocial issues and human rights violations, in accordance with international human rights standards and standards set by the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda alongside other Acts of Parliament including the UPDF Act (2005).
- 1.3. Create awareness about the roles of UGABAG commanders in response to and prevention of sexual violence during peacekeeping, promotion and protection of rights of members of communities assigned to protect as well as other vulnerable communities of concern while in and out of peacekeeping operation.
- 1.4. Reinforce attitudes and behavioral change among UGABAG commanders so as to maximize and effectively improve the protection of all survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

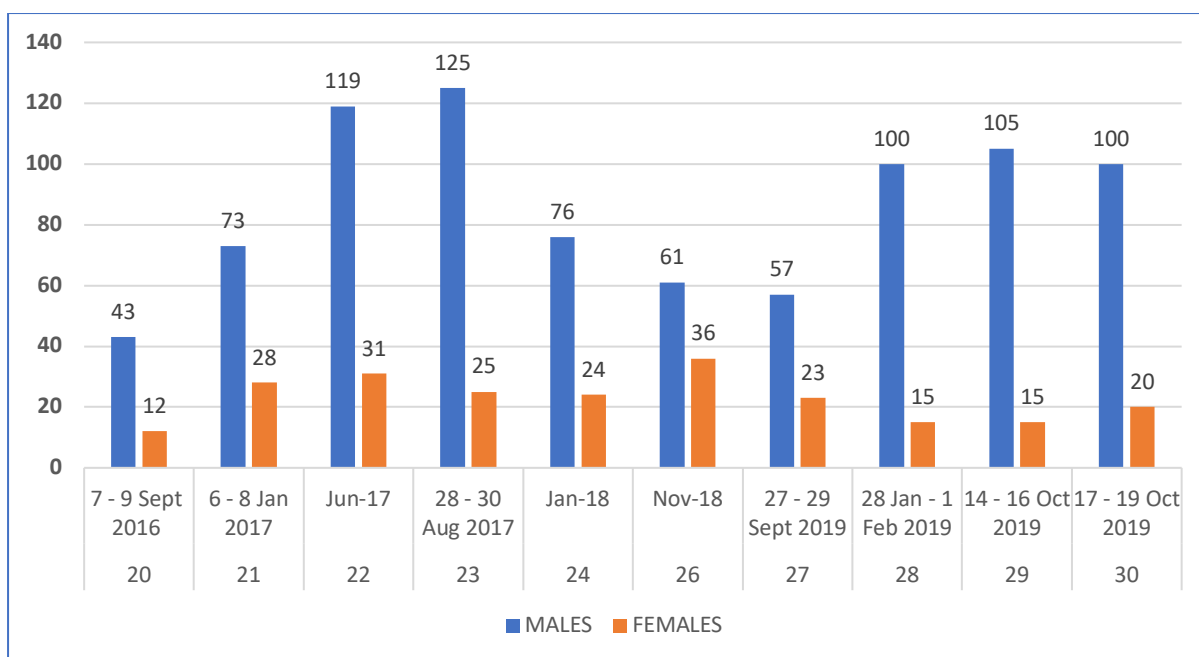


Chart 2: Summary of UGABAG trainings UGABAG XX – XXX, 2016-2019

2.2. Summary of training modules

Guided by RLP’s Training Manual for work with stakeholders, which was further customized to suit the training needs of UGABAG, the following modules were covered during the training:

- 1.1 Module 1: Overview of conflict-related sexual violence.
- 1.2 Module 2: Accountabilities and remedies: Legal frameworks governing conflict-related sexual violence.
- 1.3 Module 3: Documentation in practice: Practical session on interviewing, testimony recording and archival of evidence for further interventions.
- 1.4 Module 4: Understanding PTSD associated with conflicts and sexual violence during conflicts.
- 1.5 Module 5: Medical evidence (collection and preservation of medico-legal evidence).
- 1.6 Module 6: Roles of UGABAG in Investigation and Documentation of sexual violence.

3. Background to the evaluation

Following successful training of 1,088 Ugandan peacekeepers from UGABAG XX through to XXX, over the period 2016 - 2019, RLP conducted an evaluation with a sample group of the peacekeepers upon return. The purpose of the evaluation was to ascertain a) how the training shaped their documentation and investigations of reported and/or identified cases of sexual violence, and b) how training impacted (if any) their lives as individual soldiers but also as members of the UPDF, UGABAG, and AMISOM in general.

Guided by the general objectives of the training mentioned above, the post-deployment Focused Group Discussion with post-deployment UGABAG peacekeepers specifically explored:

- 1.1 Knowledge on the International Protocol, Sexual Violence, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), legal frameworks, documentation, and investigations of sexual violence in conflict.
- 1.2 Evidence of transfer of knowledge and skills acquired during the trainings.
- 1.3 Confirmation of application of knowledge to cases reported by both uniform and civilian population while in deployment including sensitisation on response to and prevention of sexual violence in conflicts.
- 1.4 Substantiation of scenarios, cases, success stories, and significant change stories following effective application of the knowledge obtained during the training on documentation and investigation of sexual violence while in operation.

4. Methodology

4.1. Procedural clearance

Administrative clearance for the evaluation was obtained through a written notification to the leadership of UPDF from which a planning meeting was held to discuss the proposed activity, dates, logistics, and methodologies. Subsequently, a team from RLP made two visits to the Peace Support Operation Training Centre - Singo to further plan and organise space in accordance with proposed methodology and number of participants.

On the day of the consultation, a courtesy call was made to the leadership of Singo training school to introduce the facilitators. Whereas the original plan was to interact with 30 UPDF soldiers (participants), in the event there was a higher interest. A total of 98 UPDF soldiers trained by RLP in November 2018 on the Protocol expressed interest in participating in the evaluation exercise.

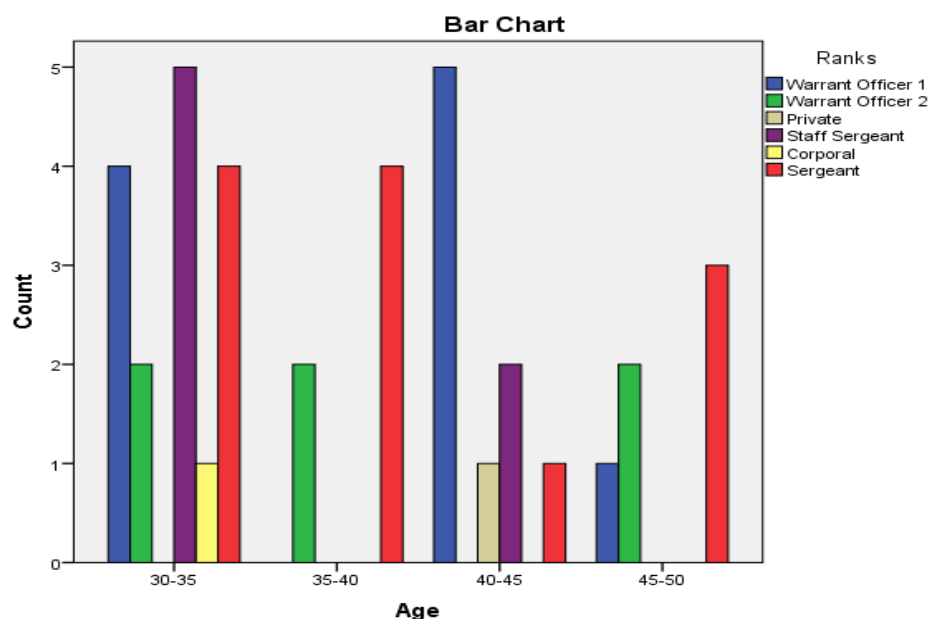
4.2. Selection of Participants

In partnership, with the leadership of the Peace Support Operation Training Centre - Singo, and the Chief Instructor, 37 participants (5 females, 32 males) took part in the evaluation. All participants were members of UGABAG XXVI trained by RLP on the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of SV in conflict in 2018. The table below shows the age aggregation of participants.

Age	Frequency	Percent
30-35	16	43.2
35-40	6	16.2

40-45	9	24.3
45-50	6	16.2
Total	37	100.0

For deeper analysis, participants were drawn from various sections, regiments, professional backgrounds, ranks, and departments of the UGABAG (see Bar Chart below), with preference given to soldiers who had been deployed more than once post training.



4.3. Data Collection

Both qualitative and quantitative methodology approaches were adopted for this evaluation. On arrival and guided by a programme that had been sent prior to the meeting, participants were briefed in one large group about the rationale of the evaluation and proposed methodology so as to address expectations and provide uniform information to all participants.

After briefing, anonymous self-administered survey questionnaires were distributed to participants to collect quantitative data including biodata to support analysis. The questionnaire had the following information:

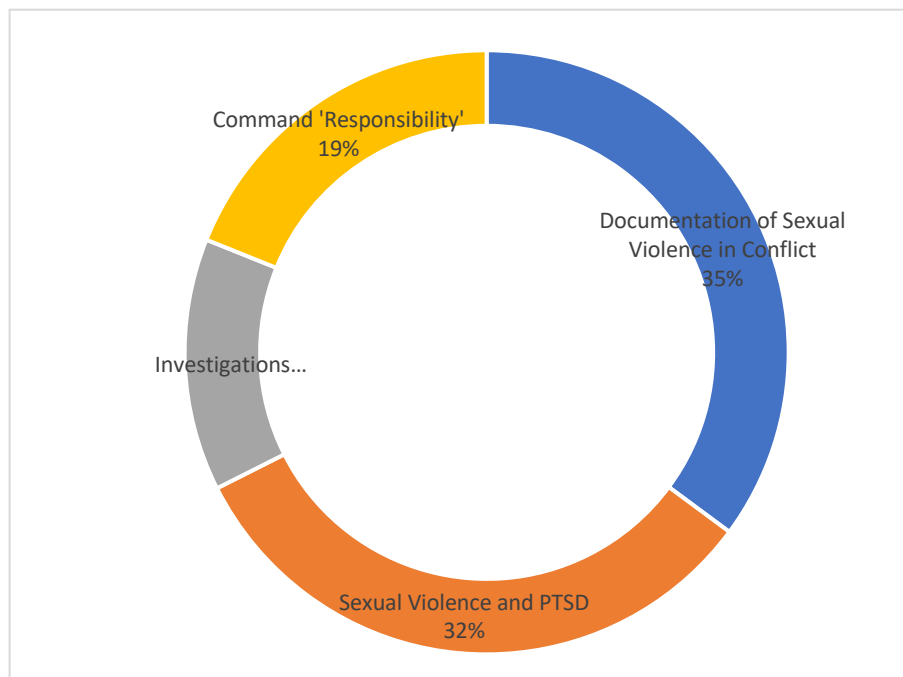
- i) age
- ii) gender
- iii) length of service with UPDF
- iv) professional background
- v) number of times deployed for peacekeeping operation
- vi) number of leave days granted during peace keeping operation, and

- vii) section/department assigned while in operation among others to triangulate and provide more information for analysis.

Data from the self-administered questionnaire were entered into SPSS database for analysis.

Participants were then divided into four groups with unequal numbers:

- i) Group 1, dubbed “Documentation of SV in conflict” had 13 members where they discussed ‘Overview of CRSV’, ‘Medical evidence’ and ‘Roles of UGABAG’.
- ii) Group 2, called “SV and PTSD”, had 23 members who reflected on a range of issues including ‘Understanding PTSD as a result of SV’, ‘Documentation in Practice’, and ‘Medical evidence’.
- iii) Group 3 had five members, all of whom were investigators deliberated on ‘Accountabilities and remedies.’
- iv) Group 4 consisted of seven Commanders who reflected on command responsibilities, strategic management and the impact of the training on their day-to-day operation as commanders.



Doughnut Graph Showing Distribution in FGD

RLP staff were assigned to the groups according to their technical expertise and modules they facilitated. Group 1’s conversation was guided by RLP’s SGBVP Officer and the Training Coordinator – all with grounded experience on Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV). Group 2 was facilitated by a Counsellor with a mental health and psychosocial support background. Group 3 was facilitated by a Lawyer, and Group 4 by the Programme Manager with a decade-long experience on Sexual Violence related programming, client support, advocacy, and strategic management.

Following several hours of Focus Group Discussions on the first day, participants were asked on the second day to discuss without the physical presence of RLP staff, what they felt were most memorable aspects as well as key impacts of the training followed by a feedback session.

The Delphi approach was used for the 'Commanders' group as a methodology to project and explore the future of RLP's training on the protocol in relation to peacekeeping operation the East and Horn of Africa. Using Delphi approach, the seven commanders were asked to predict the future of investigation and documentations during peacekeeping operation and the relevance of the protocol.

Composition of the group and facilitator remained the same as for the focus group and discussions were held up to the second round from which participants reached consensus on key predictions and projections and with concrete recommendations.



Photo showing FGD – Documentation of Sexual Violence in Conflict group

4.4. Audio-Visual Equipment

To ensure accuracy and quality reporting, audio recorders were used in the FGD. Cognisant of confidentiality and anonymity, discussions were recorded on the first day where RLP's facilitators were present, but not on the second day where the groups weaved through what they considered as key impacts of the training. Conscious of the principle of anonymity of the Delphi approach, audio recorders were not used to reduce possible fear of attribution of names to statements.

4.5. Facilitators' Debriefs

At the end of each day of the evaluation, facilitators held a debrief to interpret key issues arising as well as key findings and recommendations highlighted by participants. These later helped in the framing this report.

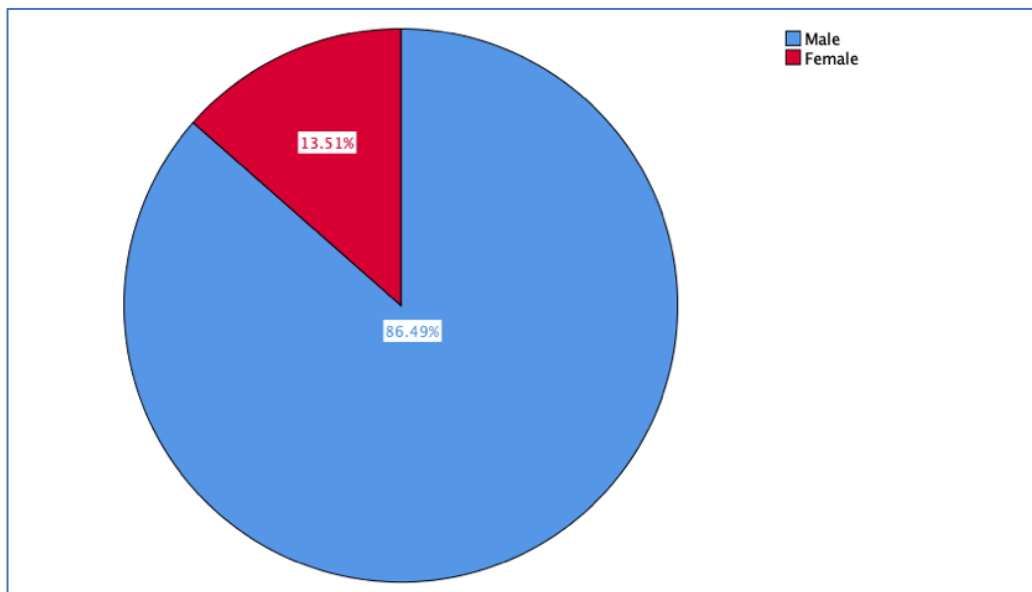


Photo showing RLP staff reflecting on participants submissions during a break

5. Evaluation Methodology limitations

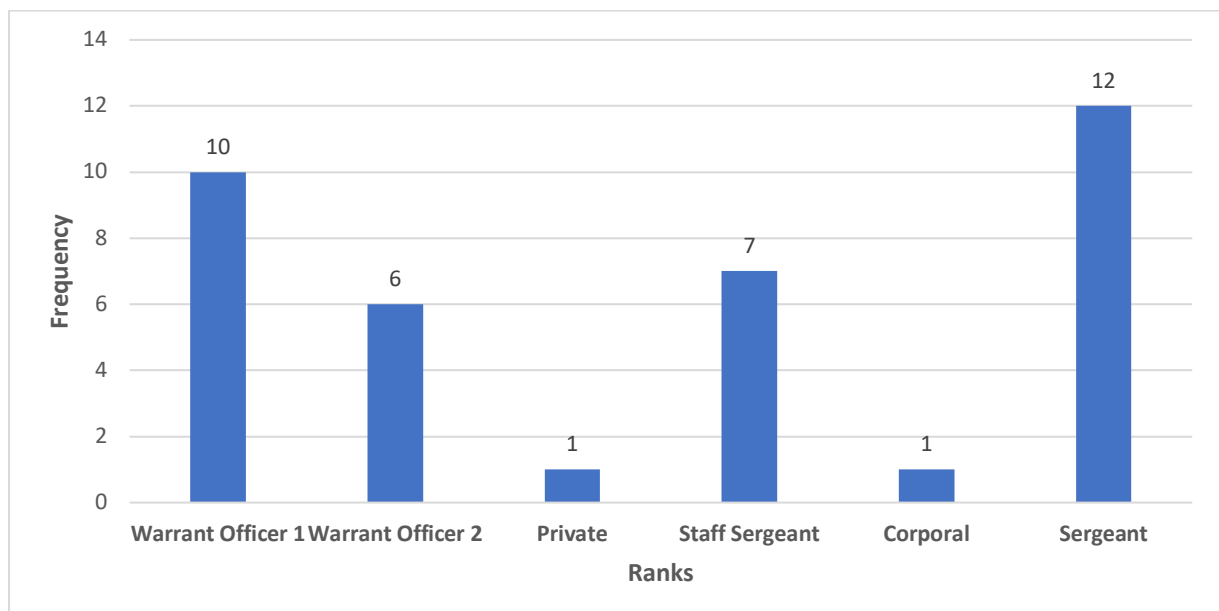
5.1. Gender dynamics

While the facilitators were gender sensitive and made deliberate efforts to realise a gender-balanced discussion through emphasis on equal numbers of women and men, only 5 females (3 health workers and 2 Female Engagement Team) finally came for the discussion representing 13.5 percent compared to 32 males representing 86.5 percent – a challenge that appears to haunt the security sector in Uganda and elsewhere. As seen from piechart below on the general number of females trained thus far, only 21 Percent were females compared to 79 percent of males.



5.2. Ranks

Related to the above, the majority of the participants were of low rank – none being an officer. As such, it was rather difficult to have administrative and command-related discussions save with those who were tasked who acted as commanders for lower units. The conversation could have been richer with perspectives of higher-ranking officers.



Crosstabulation of Ranks and Length of service with UPDF

Ranks	Length of service with UPDF					Total
	10-15 yrs	15-20 yrs	20-25 yrs	25-30 yrs	30-35 yrs	
Warrant Officer 1	3	0	3	1	3	10
Warrant Officer 2	3	1	0	0	2	6
Private	0	0	1	0	0	1
Staff Sergeant	2	0	5	0	0	7
Corporal	0	0	1	0	0	1
Sergeant	5	2	4	0	1	12
Total	13	3	14	1	6	37

5.3. Representation of UGABAG

Given the nature of discussion, which was tied to the recently returned UGABAG XXVI, the views above represent the context of operation of UGABAG XXVI, not those of all battle groups trained. From UGABAG XX through to XXX, RLP's training methodology was reviewed for quality, and necessary adjustments were made. In particular, the Protocol was revised from First Edition⁴ to Second Edition. The latter includes 'Chapter 17' on "*Sexual Violence against Men and Boys*", which addresses myths and stereotypes, scale and forms, experience and impacts, legal frameworks, and specific considerations throughout the documentation process.⁵ The findings of evaluation reported here involved only participants who had benefited from more recent training based on the Second Edition, not those who were trained using the First Edition.

5.4. Timing of post-deployment discussion

While it was deemed the 'most appropriate time' to conduct a post-deployment evaluation, some participants appeared rather exhausted and reported being 'home sick', especially those who had received news of unfortunate events that had taken place at home during their deployment to Somalia. All participants were uncertain about their next deployment given that they were selected from different units of the UPDF across the country. These dynamics may have affected concentration to some extent as some participants simply needed a break, yet the evaluation required discussions about events that happened during deployment – which to many meant 'sad memories' including death, destruction of property,

⁴https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/319054/PSVI_protocol_web.pdf

⁵https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/598335/International_Protocol_2017_2nd_Edition.pdf

and injuries among others. For future purposes it may be worth exploring the option of a longer gap between return from deployment and evaluation of impact of training.

5.5. Evidence of documentation

Participants reported verbally on a number of cases they handled at the hospitals, but without supporting documents. When asked about documents and records, facilitators were reminded of the hierarchy and protocols involved in accessing the documents at the UPDF Headquarters in Bombo, but that could not be processed immediately. Therefore, the facilitators relied on scenarios and examples provided by the participants.

5.6. Validation of the report with participants

Whereas it was practically impossible to contact participants to validate the draft report given that they had all been granted 'compassionate' leave, and therefore dispersed to various parts of the country, the draft report was shared with leadership of the school and top command of UPDF for validation and approval prior to publication.

5.7. Language Interpretation

Some participants had difficulties engaging in the FGD due to language barriers as the event was facilitated in English, yet some participants were instead fluent in Swahili. While bi-lingual interpreters were adopted from within the groups, participation was not easy because of reliance on non-professional interpreters.

5.8. Generalised statements vs. Specific details

A number of generalising statements were recorded – many without concrete examples. During FGD, participants attributed everything positive about their groups and about UPDF and UGABAG in comparison to other battle groups. When asked if there is anything that requires amendment by the leadership of UPDF, the only responses were statements such as "We were the most well-behaved groups compared to all the other battle groups". Those participants who did introduce issues that could be construed as involving UGABAG were scolded by their seniors in the same space – thus discouraging others from engaging.

6. Key Findings

Following the process of Focus Group Discussions and as per the methodology explored above, the below summary of key findings is in line with the various modules of the training as well as overall summary of administrative and technical findings generated during the conversation with participants.

6.1. Equip UGABAG peacekeepers with knowledge on the International Protocol on Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict

Recap of contents of the trainings conducted

When asked what they remember about contents of what they were trained, participants recalled with ease, contents of the trainings, modules covered, scenarios, presentations by expert and survivor facilitators, and key messages shared; all of which demonstrated commendable level of understanding of the contents covered during training on the international protocol.

When asked about some specifics they learnt prior to deployment, participants;

- a. Explained the national and international legislations governing response to and prevention of sexual violence during conflicts. From the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda to the Acts of Parliament through to regional and international laws and policies aimed at promoting accountability, participants easily listed several legal documents even though the training was conducted a year earlier.
- b. Regarding laws and policies, participants demonstrated knowledge of domestic and international laws during recap. However, they showed limited knowledge of national laws of Somalia which could be problematic given that documentation and investigations require the application of relevant national laws.
- c. All participants were able to name at least one form of sexual violence that happens during conflict situations, including but not limited to rape, defilement, sexual slavery, female genital mutilation, forced castration, forced marriage, forced pregnancy, and sexualised torture. A participant expressed frustrations;
“It’s painful to see girls as young as 12-years old married and with children too. There is hardly any law that protects girls against early and forced marriage.”
- d. Participants recapped on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and showed commendable level of understanding of PTSD, triggers, relapse, peer-to-peer support, referrals and selfcare techniques.

6.2. Improve the capacity and skills of UGABAG Commanders to transfer knowledge into credible practices

Application and transfer of training

Participants were able to discuss, with examples, how they internalised the contents of the training and how they successfully transferred the knowledge to other members of battle groups not trained by RLP and other battle groups from countries not including Uganda. Although RLP's trainers never trained Somalis directly, participants reported how they further engaged the Somali National Army on the International Protocol with emphasises on strengthening documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict.

A participant said;

"As we learnt from here, the Somali nationals including the national army learnt from us while 'on the job' as we shared with them skills learnt from the training".

Another added;

"We noticed a man forcing a widow to marry him. We detected and advised the man to negotiate with the woman but not force her and he restrained".

Triangulation of 'secondary evidence'

As an entry point in understanding manifestation of sexual violence, participants recalled how they were able to utilise the skills learnt from the training, and specifically on medical documentation and intervention, how they used the reported somatic challenges to have in-depth conversation on causational factors. Therein, cases of Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs), and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including Gonorrhoea and Syphilis were reported as common medical diagnoses. When followed by interviews, many of the victims reported one or multiple cases of sexual violence including childhood marriage and sexual slavery.

Strengthened protection of civilian communities

Besides understanding of, transfer and application of national and international laws, participants reported cases of improved protection for vulnerable groups including women and children. Privy to how war exposes children to harms, participants provided several examples of how they protected and defended children's rights.

A participant reported;

"Some of the Al-Shabaab uses women and children as spies and to violate laws. They sometimes attack AMISOM troops with stones. What do you do with those women and children? Do you beat them? Do you shoot them? No. You can't! Instead, we use the knowledge on laws to educate them on the dangers of pelting stones at AMISOM". "It worked" he added.

Broadened understanding of the dynamics of working with interpreters

From the training, and with emphasis on the role of interpreters in documentation of cases, participants reported that the training opened a new framework of working with community interpreters but also widened understanding of and viewing interpreters not only as essential medium of communication but also as victims of violence – many of whom also grapple with severe psychological and physical injuries and require professional support.

6.3. Create awareness about the roles of UGABAG Commanders in response to and prevention of sexual violence during peacekeeping

Enhanced self-discipline

Participants in all the groups cited several examples of how the training reminded them of the risks associated with engaging in sexual activity during deployments, not least the risk of accusations of sexual violence and/or sexual exploitation and abuse. Individual responsibility was acknowledged as a core lesson. Participants reported that they did not ‘cede to temptations’ by women bringing girls for commercial sex practices.

A participant from the Commanders group noted;

“[without the training] I doubt I would have easily returned to Uganda as I could have been killed or charged for breaking the rules of engagement. Poverty and hunger push some Somali women and young girls to begging food items and as such render them vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. The young girls are tempting but a reminder on our Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), Rules of Engagement (ROE), and individual liability as emphasised in the training enabled me to stay put, and I appreciate it.”

A Commander added;

It’s a pity that sometimes you see young girls and old women chasing after garbage trucks in order to find what to eat. Such situations make people vulnerable to sexual violence and if you are ignorant of laws, policies, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and Rules of Engagement (ROE), you can easily fall victim. Many times, the Somali women and girls would come saying Gift... Gift... as they beg for food items due to hunger and poverty. In the process, some also ask for sex using a phrase; ‘Amison Jiggy Jiggy?’. This [RLP’s] training has supported and continues to remind me to stand my grounds and never get lured to exploit vulnerable people and situations.

From the FGD and plenary, several scenarios of how UGABAG soldiers ‘successfully’ avoided being lured into sexual activities were reported. Participants emphasised how women (including young girls) were brought to the Forward Operating Base by their mothers and sometimes Pimps who benefit from distribution of girls to adult men for five US dollars and/or food items.

6.4. Reinforce attitudes and behavioral change among UGABAG Commanders for improved protection

Strengthened institutional systems development on prevention and response to SV

From the FGD, participants reiterated with great appreciation how the training shaped and strengthened systems development and monitoring respectively on prevention and response to sexual violence during conflicts. Specifically, the following areas were reported by the 'Commander's Group'⁶;

Messaging

Emphasis on the need to refrain from sexual activity was regularised in every day's morning briefing for all.

A participant noted;

"Couples are not allowed to stay together. If caught, both will be repatriated to Uganda. Earlier, some couples have been repatriated in the past. Even worse, a member of the United Nations Guard Unit shot his wife and yet no one knew they were in a relationship".

Target Hardening⁷

No Somali woman seeking medical services was allowed to enter the base camp unaccompanied by Female Engagement Team (FET). Following a series of engagements with senior command, and privy to emphasis on prevention of sexual violence, women seeking medical services were restricted to Out Patient Department (OPD) gazetted outside the Forward Operating Base (FOB) and only referred to the basecamp when the cases required further specialised support and strictly escorted by member of the Female Engagement Team (FET). The implementation of this SOP was made easier against the backdrop of the training.

Deterrence of 'sole' patrols

No movement of soldiers outside the defence except for patrol so as to limit individual or small group interaction between UGABAG and Somali community – all with the aim of reducing chances of proximity leading to sexual abuse and exploitation scenarios.

⁶ Refer to table for list of participants in section for Methodology

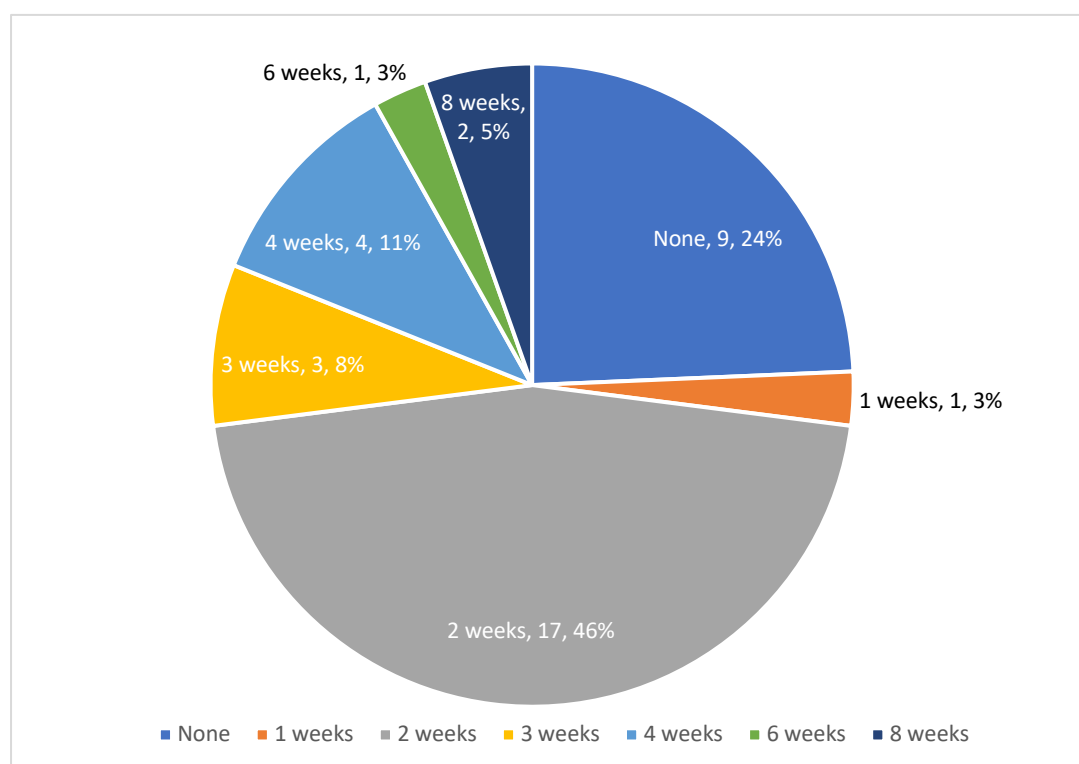
⁷ This terminology is used to describe the process of making a structure (in this case the Basecamp, Forward Operating Base or barracks) harder to access for those people (e.g. pimps) seeking to sell the sexual services of Somali women and girls more difficult

Cross FOB's transfers

Participants reported that an SOP requiring soldiers to transfer to new FOBs having served in one for a period of time was welcomed and enforced by soldiers themselves so as to reduce tendencies of getting too 'used' to a location and too familiar with the people therein. Meeting new people for a certain period of time was regarded as proactive measures to reduce and potentially eliminate chances of proximity. Following the training, participants reported not only welcoming the SOP, but helping to enforce it and self-regulating.

'Compassionate' leave⁸

Having been trained on mental health and psychological wellbeing, and specifically on the need to embrace self-care and care for caregivers, participants reported not having forgotten to ask for days off duty to visit and reconnect with families back home in Uganda. Findings from the survey questionnaire shows that 76 percent of participants had taken leave during the previous twelve months, as shown in the pie-chart below.



Feedback loop

⁸ In using this terminology here we are deferring to the UPDF's internal usages whereby all leave appears to be referred to as 'compassionate', not the more usual usage restricted to leave granted as a result of the serious illness or death of a loved one

Commanders group reported with pride that, in part thanks to enhanced knowledge about interview techniques and rapport-building resulting from the training, as well as the need to embrace dialogues with community and religious leaders, they had established a feedback loop through meeting with UGABAG commanders, CIMIC representatives, and FET to discuss the operation of peace keepers, key concerns from communities, and how to coordinate for peaceful co-existence. Participants appreciated the rapport-building techniques obtained from the training as well as other trainings organised by UPDF officers. A participant added *“We met key community and cultural leaders twice a week to obtain feedback on the work of UPDF peacekeepers”*.

7. Challenges/Dilemmas while in deployment

7.1. Where professional procedures meet cultural and religious norms

Medical personnel expressed frustration when it came to how best to address the different cultural and religious dynamics among the Somali population. From the FGD, all the 8 male health workers reported challenges conducting medical examination for Somali women, because the Somali women regarded medical examination by a man as invasive and culturally inappropriate.

A radiologist reported;

“As a health worker, you have to check [examine] a body. It was difficult to request for abdominal examination or ask a woman to remove her clothes to allow for a procedure to be conducted. Some of the women refused and I had no option than to ask them to wait for female doctors who are sometimes not available or too busy with long queues of patients.”

Another participant who is a health worker added;

“Generally, women cover their faces and that makes it difficult to recognise a person let alone detect any injury on them. A health worker cannot rely on voices to diagnose a problem and prescribe medication. This made investigation very difficult.”

Such clashes sometimes get worse especially where a husband has to be there to ‘consent’ on behalf of his wife.

Another health worker added;

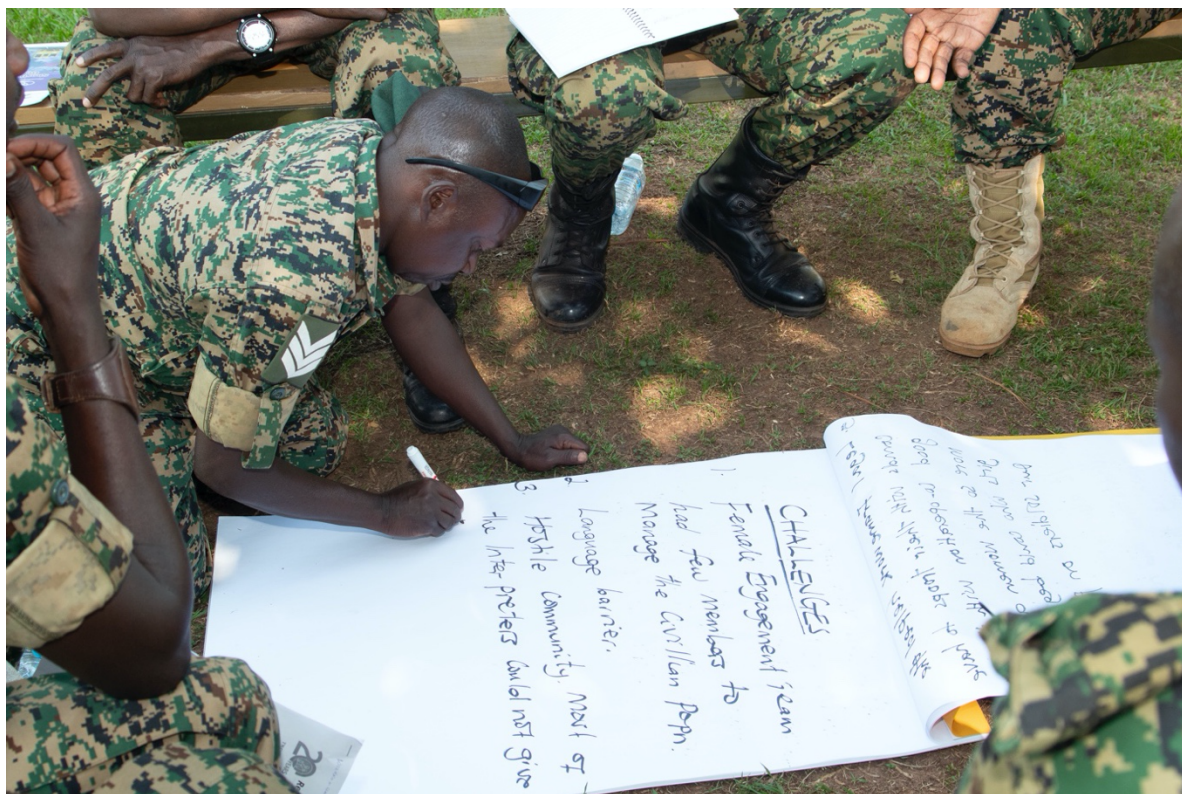
“For married women, it seems the man is the one to consent before any examination is done on his wife. So, what happens when the woman was raped, and the husband is not aware?”

While interpreters often help to explain to the patients, the need for medical examinations to proceed without consent or presence of their husbands poses challenges in accessing

medical treatment. The cultural barriers lengthen the process and it also deters discussions on 'what happened' to the patient, especially when the illness is a result of experience of sexual violence.

7.2. Interpretation and translation

Participants reported that the interpreters employed at Base Camp lack trainings on sexual violence in conflict as well as on professional interpretation skills. It was reported that some interpreters were; hard to trust; suspected to be Al-Shabaab or collaborators/informants of Al-Shabaab; high on drugs; or with additional material and financial demands. Several examples were given of interviewers quarrelling with interpreters following recognition of disconnect between instructions/requests and actions.



Participants in the 'Commanders' group reflecting on challenges

7.3. Unintended negative consequences

The FGD revealed that RLP's certificate for the UGABAG training is highly regarded as a document that helps open up further opportunities. During Focus Group Discussions, it was reported that some UGABAG members who have not been trained by Refugee Law Project (RLP) not only envy those trained in one hand but also make remarks that can be interpreted as made out of jealousy.

8. Discussion

- 1.1. Whereas participants demonstrated high level of understanding of required steps, procedures and guidelines governing documentation and investigation of sexual violence during conflict, the findings from UGABAG Peacekeepers during operations show numerous further challenges, many of which were regarded by participants as beyond the mandate and capacity of UGABAG to address. Given that peacekeepers are required to respect the sovereignty of the state, there was a lot of emphasis on the need to strengthen justice systems and rule of law, neither of which are the mandate of peacekeepers.
- 1.2. Secondly, while there has been commendable progress on establishment and/or reinforcement of preventive measures against conflict related sexual violence and/or SEA through establishment of additional SOP and guidelines to guard against SVC/SEA this compares to low levels of engagement in response measures. This could be associated to the need to be politically 'correct' as well as respect for state's sovereignty which involves calls for trust in the organs of the state.
- 1.3. Related to the above, it was clear from the FGD that the training for UGABAG on the protocol was premised on the assumption that peacekeepers' recipient countries have functional justice systems, and that the rule of law actually works to support documentation and investigations of sexual violence cases. From the conversation, it was difficult to ascertain the exact number of referrals to national authorities, and there was no evidence that participants followed-up on the few cases they were able to report to the Somali National Army (SNA). One participant reported having lost interest in referrals as it seems to 'lead to nowhere'.

A commander described the dilemma faced;

"Given what we saw, sometimes we wondered where to make referrals for cases reported to us".

- 1.4. Furthermore, the training on the International Protocol, with emphasis on 'Documentation' and 'Investigation' of sexual violence in conflict was based on the assumption that intended participants have some basic knowledge and understanding of sexual violence in conflicts including associated trauma, and legal frameworks. From the conversation, and recommendations (further expanded below), the training on the protocol would have added more value had participants received separate in-depth training on conflict-related sexual violence prior. Consequently, and as reported by participants, the facilitators had to start from the basics of conceptualising sexual violence in conflicts and as such made the three days heavily content loaded.
- 1.5. The boundary between conflict-related sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse is not always clear and needs to be articulated throughout such trainings, even though the International Protocol speaks primarily to conflict-related sexual violence.

9. Conclusions

The evaluation of the impact of the training on the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of sexual violence in conflict of UGABAG showed impressive individual, group, and institutional progress made in the understanding of and application of the laws and policies following the training on the protocol. Following the training, commendable best practices and systems strengthening initiatives were recorded as well as evidence of transfer of knowledge to UGABAG soldiers, civilian population, Somali National Army, and other battle groups.

While in deployment however, a number of factors limit the full potential of UGABAG to apply the knowledge and skills into actual day-to-day programming including language challenges, few female personnel, and lack of coordinated systems to make follow-ups of cases through to court. Stronger multisectoral coordination is required to strengthen rule of law and to develop effective systems to support investigations and document of sexual violence.

Training and sensitisation of Somali National Army, community leaders, other battle groups besides UGABAG, and communities on the dangers of sexual violence and on the relevance of the protocol is required. Institutionalisation of the training into UGABAG's training curriculum could go a long way in making the trainings sustainable.



Leah Sepuya from the British High Commission in Kampala joins a part of the evaluation process at Singo, 2 October 2019

10. Recommendations

10.1. Timing and Content of Trainings

- a. Compressing key elements arising from the International Protocol into just three days of interaction is a herculean task. There is a need to extend the training to five days. This would allow:
 - i. Much longer engagement on accountabilities and legal remedies given the complexities of understanding legal documents.
 - ii. Additional modules about relevant domestic laws and policies governing issues related to sexual violence in Somalia so that peacekeepers can compare and contrast with their domestic laws as well as shape their interventions during peacekeeping operations.⁹
 - iii. Expanded conversation on international criminal law to uniform personnel so as to broaden their understanding of Crimes Against Humanity (CAH), War Crimes (WC), Crimes of Genocide (CG), and Crimes of Aggression (CA).
 - iv. A specific module on prevention of and response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse is required.

10.2. Maximising the benefits of Trainings while in deployment

- a. Coordinate with other battle groups to also train them on the protocol.
- b. Relay message to the UN and AMISOM to strengthen coordination of battle groups to share lessons and best practices on documentation and investigations of sexual violence cases.
- c. Increase numbers of FET and female officers at the medical unit to accommodate the cultural and religious sensitivities of service seekers and as an important entry point for documentation and investigations. From the 37 participants in the evaluation, only 5 were females (3 FET, and 2 Health workers).
- d. Strengthen mechanisms for following-up on cases referred to the national hospitals and to the Somali National Army to ascertain the care and services provided.
- e. Support NGOs and INGOs to educate and sensitise communities on sexual violence in conflict as a preventive measure.

⁹ Current training curriculum does not provide for discussion on national laws of Somalia regarding to sexual violence

- f. Train Somali National Army on sexual violence and specifically on documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflicts so as to embrace creative measures in tackling sexual violence and other forms of human rights abuses.

10.3. Consolidating Training benefits through Institutional Development

- a. Strengthen access to and uptake of leave whenever possible to allow soldiers to take small breaks and to attend to their urgent family demands as well as lessens the impacts of battle fatigues, loss and injuries of colleagues. Cases of denial of pass-leave were cited for people who wanted to join their families in burial of relatives. Findings from the survey questionnaire showed that 9 out of 37 (representing 24 percent) of participants did not take any form of leave while in deployment – keeping them away from home and loved ones for a whole year.
- b. Strengthen support to families of soldiers deployed. It was reported that mental and psychosocial support to families of soldiers deployed is wanting. An example of a 6-year old daughter of a soldier defiled from the village was cited and with frustrations that the Legal Department did not offer assistance – instead, they waited for the soldier to return from deployment to follow-up on the matter as the suspect was released after three months.

With dismay, a participant asked;

“You tell us to manage SGBV issues while in deployment, but you do nothing to support our families in times of need while we are away. We need to act to avoid soldiers from taking the law into their hands especially when they seem to have lost trust in the justice system... ..Some people can shoot out of the pain and frustration!”.

10.4. Extending the Strategic Impact of Trainings

- a. Extend the training on the protocol and sexual violence in conflict to other senior commanders, whether or not they are UGABAG as they might be in the future, but meantime uses the knowledge to support their day-to-day interventions
- b. Extend the training to leadership of Uganda Police Force, especially the ‘Advanced Team’ who travels ahead of time to prepare for the arrival of the battle groups – many of whom are high ranking senior commanders.
- c. Regularise the training through training of trainers (ToT) for UGABAG facilitators so that they can extend the knowledge to all UGABAG soldiers.

- d. Structure a specific grant to ensure the training is mainstreamed into the UPDF's curriculum so that all soldier to be recruited in the future acquire the knowledge on the protocol and on sexual violence in general.
- e. Provide on-the-job training (on-the-job training) for all UPDF soldiers in various barracks and units across the country on SGBVP and Sexual Violence in general so that they join the struggle in combating sexual violence in times of relative peace and in times of conflicts.
- f. Expand the training to 'Senior Commanders' of UGABAG and UPDF to understand overall command responsibilities regarding international criminal law and international humanitarian law.¹⁰
- g. Structure a post-deployment de-brief for all trainees into every grant made

10.5. Administration of Trainings

- a. Issue certificates instantly upon completion of training and do not include ranks on the certificate as that changes with time.
- b. Organise longer courses for counsellors and health workers who bear the brunt of care for stressed and depressed colleagues during deployment.

10.6. Making the International Protocol more accessible

- a. Develop a summarised version of the Protocol in the form of factsheets, need to know guidance notes, and pocket handbooks for easy reading for those who many not have the time to read hundreds of pages.
- b. Provide a rain proof travel kit (pouch) to store different documents related to the protocol.
- c. Translate the protocol into other languages including Swahili to include readers who may struggle with English.
- d. Develop an audio file (podcast) of the protocol in English and Swahili for 'listeners on the move.'

10.7. Addressing external variables that frustrate progress

- a. Support measures against drug abuses through community campaigns. Participants noted that many Somali National Army (SNA) depend on drugs including miraa which they believe 'helps to boost their mental processing and memories'

¹⁰ The training is yet to reach Senior Command of UPDF

- b. Train interpreters on sexual violence and on professional interpretation. Provide lessons to UGABAG on key phrases of Somali language prior to deployment.
- c. Support livelihood initiatives for Somali community to fight poverty – a contributing factor to early and forced marriages
- d. Strengthen capacity of rule of law stakeholders in countries of deployment to support investigations

Annex I About Refugee Law Project

RLP is an outreach project for the School of Law, Makerere University, established in 1999 in response to research which indicated that refugees and asylum seekers do not fully enjoy their rights in Uganda. The initial focus on provision of Legal Aid and Psychosocial support to forced migrants has since expanded to include 5 thematic programme areas; Access to Justice, Mental Health & Psychosocial Wellbeing, Gender & Sexuality, Media for Social Change, and Conflict, Transitional Justice and Governance. Currently, RLP has thirteen (13) offices across the country (Kampala, Gulu, Kitgum, Hoima, Kiryandongo, Adjumani, Lamwo, Arua, Yumbe, Moyo, Mbarara, Nakivale, and Kyangwali), supported by Operations and Programme Support (OPS) with over 210 fulltime staff, of which 35 percent are refugees.

Over the years, RLP has grown to become a 'Leading Centre for Justice and Forced Migrants', conducting cutting-edge research, evidence-based advocacy, service provision to forced migrants in various refugee settlements and refugee hosting districts across Uganda, and training of stakeholders and duty-bearers.¹¹

RLP's Vision

RLP envisions *"A context where all people enjoy their human rights, irrespective of their legal status"*. This vision is informed by relevant international laws as well as the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda.

RLP's Mission

RLP mission is to empower asylum seekers, refugees, deportees, IDPs, and host communities to enjoy their human rights and lead dignified lives.

Mandate

RLP strikes to;

- a. Promote the protection, well-being, and dignity of forced migrants and their host communities
- b. Empower forced migrants, host communities and all associated actors to challenge and combat injustices in policy, law, and practice
- c. Influence national and international debate on matters of forced migration, justice, and peace
- d. Be a resource for forced migrants and relevant actors through knowledge building and modelling best practices

Core Values

RLP's core values are;

- a. Independence

¹¹ Visit <https://www.refugeelawproject.org> or more information.

- b. Innovation
- c. Non-discrimination
- d. Respect
- e. Professionalism
- f. Accountability
- g. Rigour

Annex II About the Gender and Sexuality Programme of Refugee Law Project

Gender and Sexuality Programme is one of the five thematic programmes of RLP. Its main aim is to facilitate gender sensitivity and inclusivity, raise awareness and provide inclusive SGBVP response and prevention interventions.

The programme actively engages individuals, families, communities, and institutions, whether as victims, perpetrators, or stakeholders, at local, national and international levels to transform practice, policy and discourse on gender and sexuality towards greater inclusivity for all. Gender and Sexuality's work is geared towards ensuring best practices, documentation, and dissemination of information about SGBVP among forced migrants and host communities, conducting evidence-based advocacy, lobbying and research on sexual and gender-related issues among forced migrants.¹²

Vision

Gender and Sexuality programme envisions *"A conducive environment in which all people understand, attain, recover and enjoy their sexual and gendered being and rights regardless of their legal status"*.

Mission

The mission statement below governs the operation of the Gender & Sexuality (G&S) programme;

"To actively engage individuals, families, communities, and institutions, whether as victims, perpetrators or stakeholders, at local, national and international levels to transform practice, policy and discourse on gender and sexuality towards greater inclusivity and access for all."

Strategic Goal

The programme's strategic goal is;

"To be a nationally and internationally recognized programme in documenting and disseminating inclusive SGBVP prevention and response interventions and services as well as conducting research, training, and advocacy in the areas of gender, sexuality and forced migration".

¹² Visit <https://www.refugeelawproject.org/our-work/gender-and-sexuality-programme> for more information.

Objectives

The programme are;

- i. Ensuring best practices to SGBVP response and prevention
- ii. Documenting best practices on SGBVP
- iii. Advocacy & lobbying on key SGBVP issues of focus
- iv. Research on gender and sexuality issues.

Annex III Copyright Statement

The views expressed herein reflect the outcome of a two-day engagements with members of UGABAG XXVI who had returned from peacekeeping operation and were waiting to return to their units or be assigned to another unit.

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