



**National Council of  
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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24 February 2015

S15.06

## **Submission to the Nonviolent Peaceforce on the UN Peace Operations**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing 288 organisations affiliated at either the national level or to one of our 21 branches. In addition to our organisational membership, about 260 women are individual members of branches. NCWNZ's function is to represent and promote the interests of New Zealand women through research, discussion and action. This submission has been prepared by one of our members based on her extensive experience.

### **Introduction**

The key issue for military peacekeepers is that their basic training is to be soldiers, to do battle against a perceived enemy. Peacekeeping is seen as a way to keep opposing factions apart and to attempt to ensure that there is no more bloodshed. They seldom understand the root causes of the conflict, especially when their own country might have had some responsibility (through colonisation or policies in their own country) for the conflict. They may have a mandate to assist with development but this is often seen as "winning hearts and minds" rather than participating in genuine and necessary development projects that are based on building local capacity through working in partnership with local people, especially the women.

In countries undergoing conflict, the women are usually those trying to maintain a living and keep families together, while the men are fighting – or dead. These women are unlikely to be included and consulted as part of a peace exercise.

Peacekeeping missions are usually male-dominated. The men are often young, away from home and may be under extreme pressure due to the conflict. They need to relax during non-working time and often look to local women for short-term relationships. They do not understand the culture and the vulnerability of the women who may be hoping to get away to a peaceful situation. If civilian women were included in peace missions, they could monitor such situations, ensuring that both parties understood possible consequences.

## **How could current peace keeping operations benefit from the input of civil society organizations? What is, or could be, civil societies' contribution to peace operations?**

Civil society organisations, both local and international, work in local communities. Many have been in place for a long time and, if from overseas, have worked to understand the culture. They do not see themselves as permanent but are providing necessary skills until local people can take over again. Peacekeepers often have little respect for these organisations, considering them to be “do-gooders” who achieve very little. They do not understand the long-term aspect of development, especially because most peacekeeper deployments are for only 6 months – they want to achieve as much as possible during that time, by doing it all themselves. CSOs in the peacekeepers' home country should always participate in pre-deployment training.

## **What would peace operations look like if they were designed to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war?**

They would focus on the causes of the conflict, working with local people at community level to address the basic issues. They would include more civilians with development and mediation experience. Women would be key participants since they could relate better to the experience of local women.



Rae Duff

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