

**UD's 2012 Spotlight on Technology, Art, Research & Scholarship (STARS)**

**Proposed Presentation Abstract**

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**Women on the Front Lines for Women: A Closer Look at All-Female UN Peacekeeping Units**

With the passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, for the first time international community not only recognized women's participation in peacekeeping as an issue of gender equality and women's rights, but also as one of the preconditions for full operational impact of the peacekeeping operations themselves. In other words, women's rights were not just 'good for women' but also represented untapped resources that could contribute to peace mission of the UN. Despite this international legal mandate, women represent 3 and 10 percent, respectively, of the total number of military and police personnel currently deployed in such missions. These numbers stand in direct contrast to the aim of SCR 1325 to include more women in global and regional peace operations from senior leadership roles to the peacekeepers themselves. To be sure, the international community has fallen short on achieving a gender balance in peace operations.

Despite these dismal numbers, the UN has embarked on new territory with the creation and the deployment of several all-female peacekeeping units as part of the larger missions in Liberia, Haiti and Timor-Leste. While a few preliminary, anecdotal reports have emerged, there has been virtually no systematic evaluation of the impact of these all-female units in mission. My research seeks to better understand the impact these all-female units have on the overall success of the peacekeeping missions and what such approaches mean for women's rights and gender equality on the ground. This ongoing research considers how these all-female forces contribute to the mandated goals of the mission; how they interact with the local communities in which they operate; how they influence interactions among other peacekeepers; and how the women peacekeepers are impacted by the deployment experience. In short, this research examines the impact of all-female units from a feminist perspective and employs a human rights lens to assess what the presence of these women peacekeepers means for gender equality at the local and global level.