

# 2 INTERNATIONAL MEDIA AND UN PEACEKEEPING

This chapter builds on a United Nations Association in Canada public dialogue event to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UN Peacekeeping on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006 in Halifax, which included a public forum and a closed experts' roundtable. Participants of the closed experts' roundtable and panelists at the linked public dialogue event discussed the role of international media in UN peacekeeping. An identified challenge was the difficulty in presenting news stories as emerging, pressing and relevant to target audiences at home. The participants explored tools and processes for UN peacekeeping missions in the field to get their message out to the international community and to help build support for UN peacekeeping more generally. The opinions expressed in this chapter and the recommendations are derived from UNA-Canada's consultation process and are not necessarily the views of the organization.

Feature panelists at both events included **Douglas T. Coffman**, Public Information Officer, UN Department of Public Information; **Tim Dunne**, Former Military Public Affairs for DND & NATO; **Alex Morrison**, President, MSC, CD, Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies; **Olivia Ward**, Toronto Star; **Kim Kierans**, Director, University of King's College School of Journalism, Moderator. Please refer to Appendix 1 for a complete list of participants.

## BACKGROUND: INTERNATIONAL MEDIA AND UN PEACEKEEPING<sup>1</sup>

Media is often described as a double-edged sword<sup>2</sup>. When employed positively, media can become an instrument of conflict resolution and a catalyst for peaceful change. However, when employed as a means to propagate intolerance and hatred, and to incite violence, media becomes a negative force among efforts to foster peace. International media exerts a powerful influence on people and on their perceptions of the world they live in. International media's primary role is to report and disseminate objective information. Media is also increasingly mobile and has the unique ability to reach many at an unprecedented rate, making it an unparalleled tool for disseminating information. This information should be accurate and balanced, and should be a fair representation of the diverse views, to allow the public to make well-informed choices.

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, the term 'peacekeeping' refers to operations authorized by the United Nations (under Chapters 6, 7 and 8) to monitor cease-fires and/or support the implementation of peace agreements, and to initiate peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction activities.

<sup>2</sup> Ross Howard, *An Operational Framework for Media and Peacebuilding*, report prepared for IMPACS, Vancouver, B.C. (2002). [http://www.impacs.org/files/MediaPrograms/framework\\_apr5.pdf](http://www.impacs.org/files/MediaPrograms/framework_apr5.pdf).

International media and UN peacekeeping are closely linked. International media can act as a tool to promote conflict resolution and peacekeeping operations. According to one author, “there is an emerging belief that the media may well be the most effective means of conflict resolution and preventing new wars.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the media plays a critical role in garnering both international and local support for peace operations. Information and communication are vital to build trust and ensure the support of the local population for the mission. Information is also crucial to gather support from external actors, including donor countries. The media can also hold leaders and officials accountable, monitor human rights, and act as an early warning tool for conflict.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, peacekeeping missions may provide the media with a secure environment in which to work. These roles are explored in the next section.

Before doing so, however, it is important to recognize that as UN peacekeeping operations become more complex, so do the needs of the media. In fact, new approaches are emerging facilitating the media to find ways to adapt to the changing environment. Stories increasingly reflect the changes to UN peacekeeping since the end of the Cold War and its evolving complexity, media actors have greater access to technology, while the use of the internet is conducted with much more scrutiny than before, and the media is increasingly building strategies and partnerships with the UN and its peacekeeping missions, NGOs, and governments.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN UN PEACEKEEPING?

As mentioned above, one of media’s primary roles within UN peacekeeping is to report and disseminate objective information. Media also plays a key role in fostering both international and local support for peacekeeping missions and in building trust between peacekeepers and the local population. International media is necessary to help build support for a mission, to advise donors that their help is needed, and to solicit more funding. At the same time, the UN also wants to inform the population of the programmes it is undertaking, and seek their participation in identifying their strengths and difficulties. Unlike any other source of information, media increasingly has the ability to reach, inform, and shape the opinions of the international and global public.

There is no doubt that the media’s impact on conflict management and resolution has been enhanced since the end of the Cold War.<sup>5</sup> As conflicts increasingly occur within sovereign states, the conditions under which a peacekeeping force is deployed become more complex and problematic. As a result, journalists may have a greater role to play in presenting events in a way that will garner international attention and interest. Indeed, international media is often believed to have a significant influence on the funding earmarked to specific regions or projects. While this influence may not be as direct as often thought of when referring to the CNN effect,

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<sup>3</sup> Howard.

<sup>4</sup> Howard.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Vigo Jakobsen, “Focus on the CNN Effect Misses the Point: The Real Media Impact on Conflict Management is Invisible and Indirect,” *Journal of Peace Research* 37, 2 (2000): 131-143.

media “provides the people with the opportunity to develop empathy for the plight of others and hence creates the space for common understanding and social interaction.”<sup>6</sup> Although creating an understanding of a specific situation is an advantage for peacekeeping operations, some criticize the media’s predisposition to cover actual conflicts or humanitarian crises, as opposed to peacekeeping missions. As a matter of fact, it is argued that the media’s ignorance of conflicts in their pre and post-conflict phases and its selective coverage often cause a shift in the focus and funds from more cost-effective long-term preventive and rebuilding efforts to short-term emergency relief.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the international media is often accused of losing interest once a conflict is over. There is even less attention given to peacekeeping success stories.

Concurrently, governments are also capable of “driving” media to mobilize support for a peacekeeping force.<sup>8</sup> The role of media and of governments in disseminating information is discussed in the section on the Role of Local and International Media in Canada.

The next section explores various tools and processes for UN peacekeeping missions in the field to get their message out to the international community and to help build support for UN peacekeeping more generally.

## **TOOLS AND PROCESSES FOR DISSEMINATING MESSAGES AND INFORMATION**

Coffman observed that in the past, the interest of the news media in peacekeeping missions was limited. Today, news media is only one aspect of public information. Other tools to get the messages out include the distribution of newspapers, the use of dance troops and comedians and the creation of radio and television programmes. Evidently, much attention is being focused on how to get the messages out and how to develop an effective and gripping sound bite. Participants explored various tools and processes for UN peacekeeping missions to disseminate messages and information. The tools are divided into three types of tools for disseminating information: general media tools, mission specific public information programmes, and advocacy.

First, however, let us define what is meant by media. For the purpose of this chapter, media consists of editorialists, columnists, and reporters whom disseminate information through various mediums such as the newspaper, radio or television. In addition to understanding what media is, several participants raised the importance of knowing the target audience of the media in order to influence their point of view. Indeed, the message is not “to” media, but “through” media. In this context, target audiences consist of the global public, the population of a country where a peacekeeping mission is deployed, and the population in countries participating (or contemplating participation) in the mission.

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Hunt, “Public Information as a Mission Critical Component of West African Peace Operations,” KAIPTC Monograph No. 5 (2006): 10.

<sup>7</sup> Jakobsen, 131.

<sup>8</sup> See Jakobsen, 134.

## GENERAL MEDIA TOOLS

While raising moral and financial support is always part of the UN's agenda, peacekeeping missions also want to inform the public about what they are doing, and involve them in identifying strengths and weaknesses of peace efforts. In coordination with the Department of Public Information at the UN headquarters in New York, press conferences and press releases on UN peacekeeping objectives and activities are perhaps the most effective tools the UN can use to reach both local and international audiences. UN peacekeeping missions are increasingly learning to use the media positively as a conflict management tool, especially through the use of radio. Doing so involves "the formulation of clear information and public relation strategies from the outset of an operation to target international as well as local audiences, an ability to provide the media with timely and reliable information, and an ability to inform the local media and the local population about the purpose of the operation in order to counter misinformation and propaganda."<sup>9</sup>

For journalists that cannot report from within a peacekeeping mission, other options exist for acquiring information. Journalists have access to peacekeeping information through press conferences, press briefings, op-eds, teleconferencing meetings. For example, every head of mission goes to New York to give press briefings. Heads of mission will also take advantage of video teleconferencing technology and hold internal meetings and press conferences with journalists in New York from their mission location. The Secretary General may release op-eds, which are translated and distributed around the world. Journalists will also have access to information disseminated through the UNDPI. Generally, the UNDPI will provide information to a spokesperson in New York, who will then give the information to a reporter, encouraging them to focus on the peacekeeping perspective. The UNDPI also uses UN news wire service, where countries can reproduce articles for free. Information is also disseminated using press releases, though most missions have limited distribution lists. In many cases, press releases are just sent to colleagues at UN headquarters and journalists in the mission area, as opposed to being widely disseminated. Nevertheless, UNDPI is trying to improve its distribution.

UNIFEED is another system used by the UN to get its messages out. The system is used globally and provides footage from the field via satellite to AP news service. While it does not provide for a complete picture of the mission, it shows what people are doing on the ground. It is possible for national news media to request footage, for example Canadian media can request footage of Canadians on the ground. New media can also subscribe to the service.

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<sup>9</sup> Jakobsen, 141.

<sup>10</sup> Hunt.

## MISSION-SPECIFIC PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAMMES

When peacekeepers are deployed to a post-conflict environment, the local media infrastructures are often lacking capacity, or are altogether destroyed. Local media is often the first institution in society to be disrupted by conflict. Insecurity becomes a major obstacle to the development of media in post-conflict environments, causing imposed or self-censorship to occur, and inhibiting freedom of expression. In this context, it is primordial that a neutral environment be created where media can re-emerge as an independent and reliable source of information. Peacekeeping operations thus play a key role in fostering such neutral environment and in providing a safe environment for media development. For example, since the UN's mission in Namibia in the late 1980s, UN peacekeeping has developed internal mission public information programs, using its own forms of media to promote awareness of the operation and its mandate.

As peacekeeping operations are inherently dependent on the approval and support of the local population, public information programmes have become a crucial element of contemporary peacekeeping.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, public information is said to lie at the heart of a peacekeeping operation, ensuring its credibility and legitimacy both in the field and abroad.<sup>11</sup> The Handbook on UN Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations further refers to a mission public information programme as an “excellent tool for enhancing confidence in the peace process, building trust among parties to a conflict, and generating support for national reconciliation.”<sup>12</sup> As a result, many agree that a mission specific public information programme is central to a peace mission, and should be deployed in advance of the rest of the mission.<sup>13</sup> As Coffman explained, the role of the UN Department of Public Information is not only to inform, but also to convince people to buy-in to the process. Media can foster that process by talking to political parties and individual citizens, discussing success stories and coping mechanisms. Another example is in Sudan, the mission's Public Information unit distributes simplified and translated versions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to the local population. Media can also reach out to refugee populations to ensure basic humanitarian requirements are being met.

Still, questions arise regarding the impact of international media on local media development. Some denounce the gap between the financial resources received by the international media and those received by the local media infrastructures, and question the impact of the unequal playing field on the capacity of the local media to develop. Realizing this deficiency, some NGOs such as Journalists for Human Rights or IMPACS are working towards developing greater local capacity.

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<sup>11</sup> Hunt.

<sup>12</sup> Handbook on Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick Coker, “The Role of the Media and Public Information,” in *Sierra Leone: Building the Road to Recovery*, eds. Mark Malan, Sarah Meek, Thokozani Thusi, Jeremy Ginifer, and Patrick Coker, 77-88. Institute for Security Studies, South Africa. <http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/pmt/exhibits/1046/coker.pdf>.

## **ADVOCACY**

Participants also discussed the role of advocacy in disseminating peacekeeping information and asked whose responsibility it is to advocate. While the UN undertakes a large part of its advocacy, participants recognized that there is only so much it can do, especially when no one is receptive to the message. Tim Dunne suggested that like-minded nations advocate among themselves. While he acknowledged the challenge of getting people interested, it is especially difficult to do so when there is a highly politicized indigenous media that is communicating against goals you are trying to achieve. The example of Haiti was mentioned where the UN was being inundated by the pro-Aristide media. In such circumstances, there is a need for greater dissemination and distribution of UN media to help persuade those opposed to the UN mission and presence. At the same time, public Information offices in UN peacekeeping missions need capacity building to focus their messages.

While international media is often regarded as being too reactive, many believe that the media's greater mobility and flexibility, due in part to the use of satellite phones, lightweight laptops, and digital cameras, is a sign of hope that things may be changing, as greater mobility and access may in fact increase the ability of the media to be proactive. Being proactive would in fact strengthen the international media's ability to serve as an indicator or early warning device for conflict and genocide.

## **OBSTACLES FACING UN PEACEKEEPING IN THE MEDIA**

Participants identified a number of obstacles that UN peacekeeping missions and international media are confronted with when attempting to get out messages. These obstacles have to do with media access, with the training and professionalism of journalists, with media coverage, time pressures and resources, and with the practice of embedding journalists and the need to ensure the safety of media practitioners.

### **MEDIA ACCESS**

Participants argued that above all else, journalists require access. They require access to authoritative spokespersons, to activities and venues, and once on location, to facilitators, interpreters, and sometimes bodyguards or troops, to help them understand what is happening, to help them interpret events and policies, and to ensure that they do not jeopardize their security. According to Dunne, however, news media are often dismissed as being obstacles to meeting an objective in a peacemaking, peace sustainment, or peace implementation context; they are marginalized and at the very least, not given the support they require. In Dunne's view, commanders of peace support operations need to look at journalists in a different light. Journalists should be looked upon as facilitators, and not as problems. If given the opportunity, journalists can promote a peaceful resolution to challenges.

Alex Morrison also mentioned that the media should take advantage of the expertise and knowledge of NGOs that work alongside peacekeeping missions. For example, the International Committee for the Red Cross can comment on constraints and limits of war that are being broken and can report on what is going on the ground.

## TRAINING AND PROFESSIONALISM OF JOURNALISTS

A major concern regarding the media and UN peacekeeping is the fact that reporters are often limited in their background knowledge of the situation they are covering. For example, Tim Dunne observed that Canadian journalists who visited Canadian troops abroad in the 1980s were largely ignorant of the larger policy, diplomatic and military issues that were involved. However, he noted that when the first Gulf War began in 1990, a program was implemented to inform interested journalists about the concept of operations for maritime, air and land operations, too many journalists are still without the requisite background knowledge needed to cover complex peace operations. This realization has led many to suggest the need for issue-specific education or training of journalists. While most participants agreed with the idea of 'educating' or training journalists, one participant questioned the idea, describing it as 'pointless and naïve.'

Nevertheless, participants commented that such a process is already happening, mentioning training programmes through Dalhousie University and the Royal Institute. Internationally, an initiative is being undertaken by the Red Cross with much success. The Red Cross is training journalists on issues of international law, and in doing so, has found that journalists often report differently when exposed to the law perspective. Others also recommended looking at strategies and partnerships between the UN and journalists, as a means to enhance understanding on the part of the media.

Journalists are also required to be responsible, accountable and professional in the exercise of their profession, in the same way that all other professionals are ethically required to conduct themselves. However, as Tim Dunne noted, in places like the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo and in some African nations, the level of professional conduct of journalists is often lacking, and their abilities to meet journalistic standards of fairness, objectivity and balance are mostly absent. Some journalists have even adopted reporting styles that promote ethnic hatreds and political extremism, which remind us of the consequences of the broadcast of extremist and genocidal messages by the Rwandan radio station, Radio des Mille Collines, an example of the politicization of news rooms in the most extreme.

Finally, the need for sensationalizing events was also mentioned as an obstacle to greater in-depth peacekeeping coverage. According to Ron Griffiths, journalists are restricted by the audience's craving for sensationalism and tabloid-like journalism. Ann Griffiths also commented that media and UN peacekeeping are working at contradictory purposes. In her view, the goal of peacekeeping is to maintain the status quo, that is, peacekeeping is successful when there is peace, without situations of drama. For the media, however, situations where nothing is happening are not worth their attention. The real challenge, thus, consists of 'fixing' this contradiction, and trying to realign the fundamental purpose of the media to better serve the goals of peacekeeping. Evidently, in order to accurately report on the status of peacekeeping operations, journalists need to go beyond the 'simple' sound bite.

## MEDIA COVERAGE, TIME PRESSURES AND RESOURCES

Participants commented that international media often loses interest after the fighting has ceased. Participants also observed that the attention given to peacekeeping success stories is even more trivial. The media tends to be more preoccupied with new wars and the eruption of violence, than with successes at preventive diplomacy or peacemaking. While complex peacebuilding operations are situated very low on the media radar, conflict prevention receives even less attention. As Olivia Ward observed, once a conflict is over, media interest migrates elsewhere, even if turbulences continue. Reporters who are able to remain in post-war zones most often see their stories diminish in importance, getting less and less air time and column space, to the point where their influence with the public or with governments is close to nil. In Ward's opinion, the message is brutally clear: with new threats emerging everywhere—both real and imagined—the highly competitive news business moves on. Ward also argued that when examining the media's role in peace missions, the issue of politics also cannot be underestimated. Indeed, the media is generally more involved where the United States is present, as seen from the media coverage given to Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>14</sup>

Time pressures also restrict the ability of journalists to adequately report on a specific issue. Reflecting on his own experience, Ross Lord noted that journalists have a limited amount of time in which to write. While he tries to explore avenues that he does not know or that the public does not know, in the end, the final product is only 2 minutes. As a consequence, the story can only be so comprehensive. More often than not, reporters never get to tell the entire story.

As a consequence of such pressures, the media can sometimes become a source of confusion rather than comprehension. For example, within the Canadian context, participants recognized that Canadian citizens do not understand the exact nature and objectives of the mission in Afghanistan, nor do they understand the nature of Canada's contribution and the reality on the ground. In Ward's opinion, the media is partly to blame for the confusion and uncertainty surrounding peace operations such as the mission in Afghanistan. In her view, the media has often failed to illuminate the nature of peacemaking missions and the divisions between them and UN peacekeeping missions. In addition, Ward argued that the majority of the time, the media is not taking the time and space to explain the complexity of peace efforts, which are not short, isolated campaigns, but a continuum: peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. While she sees the creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission as recognition by governments of the need for a long-term approach to building peace, she insisted that the hard political sell that sustaining peace requires, often calling for the support of the media, is barely beginning.

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<sup>14</sup> Human Security Report 2006.

Finally, limited resources also constrain the level of information the public receives. Coffman observed that very few media outlets have full staff for international coverage beyond CNN and BBC. Even in the case of CNN, there is only one full-time African-desk reporter, a limited number when considering that most peacekeeping missions are in Africa. Local newspapers fare worse, as they rarely have adequate budgets to send people on short notice to cover conflict zones. In such circumstances, a tool commonly used is news wires. AP, BCC and Reuters, for example, sell their fact-based stories to news media and they are always present.

## **EMBEDDING JOURNALISTS AND SAFETY OF MEDIA PRACTITIONERS**

Ensuring the safety and impartiality of journalists in conflict situations is a major challenge that must be addressed. Journalists must be aware of how fragile their own security can be in some of these operations. According to Reporters Without Borders, in 2005, 63 journalists and 5 media assistants were killed for doing their jobs, at least 807 journalists were arrested, and over 1,300 physically attacked or threatened. Iraq was the deadliest country for the media, with 24 journalists and 5 media assistants killed.<sup>15</sup>

While the practice of embedding journalists is not new, it nonetheless remains controversial. Although the media is for the most part trying to distance itself from the military, the latter is crucial to ensure the safety of journalists when accessing remote or highly volatile areas. Embedding journalists thus becomes a necessity for journalists in areas of high insecurity such as Afghanistan and Iraq. However, embedded journalists may also face restrictions, in particular with respect to reporting content. While the public's concern is that the media is being "filtered," non-embedded journalists often face harsher work conditions and greater security challenges. While embedding within UN peacekeeping missions has never actually taken place, owing in general to the level of stability of most missions, the practice could become a practical option to raise awareness of UN peacekeeping missions in areas where security is more volatile.

However, Olivia Ward explained that the reason why the growing tendency to embed journalists in the military has worked to some extent, is because it requires journalists to conform to certain rules and restrictions, which they would otherwise reject. Psychologically, embedding has the disadvantage, too, of making journalists part of an "us or them" scenario in which they share the conditions of the military, and view the landscape outside of their unit as hostile or irrelevant. In this regard, Ward emphasized the fact that embedding can work against efforts to communicate the reality behind peace missions, because it gives reporters little, if any opportunity, to view the real conditions of those who live in the countries they are covering— including civilians, fighters, rebels

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<sup>15</sup> Reporters Without Borders, *Press Freedom in 2005*, 2006. [http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id\\_article=16088](http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=16088). The figures refer to journalists everywhere, and not just in conflict situations.

or insurgents. In her view, without this vital knowledge, journalists can only contribute a superficial and skewed view of reality on the ground, and of the long-term problems faced by those whose job is to ensure the peace.

## **ROLE OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA IN CANADA**

As argued above, governments are also capable of “driving” media to mobilize support for the use of force.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, national media can help build support for domestic participation in UN peacekeeping by telling the stories of Canadian contributions to UN efforts to keep peace through patrols, confidence building, as well as logistical and material support to post-conflict reconstruction. Alternatively, media can be an effective tool for justifying Canada’s non-involvement, without necessarily addressing a range of perspectives, or views on how Canada’s role in UN peacekeeping has and could evolve. While increased coverage of international conflict has increased awareness of UN peacekeeping operations more generally, most participants agreed that peacekeeping is understood by very few in Canada and by the media in general. It can also be said that general knowledge of Canada’s contribution to UN peacekeeping remains limited and somewhat confused. As Morrison insisted, journalists are not always adequately prepared to report on Canada and UN peacekeeping. He also mentioned that there are very few Canadian military writers and journalists, and that there are even fewer writers of peacekeeping.

On this issue, participants agreed that the national media was in part responsible for fostering certain myths that Canada is more involved in UN peacekeeping than it really is. Concomitantly, this is a myth that may work to the advantage of certain political actors who seek support for other sorts of international operations. In fact, it is not often discussed that Canada’s contribution to UN peacekeeping as of August 30, 2006, amounted to 126 military observers, UN police and troops.<sup>17</sup> This is in comparison to 2,286 as part of Canada’s contribution to the NATO led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. This discrepancy is one that deserves further attention and explanation in the media. Still, Morrison stressed that Canada’s smaller contribution to UN peacekeeping does not mean that Canada believes peacekeeping is not worth it. In his view, it simply suggests that Canada has shifted focus to another area. For example, the Canadian military is investing heavily in the training of peacekeepers. Accordingly, peacekeeping is one of the many things that the Canadian military does.

Another example of the media and the public’s misunderstanding of peacekeeping is the media’s common reference to Afghanistan as a peacekeeping operation. In echoing this point, Olivia Ward mentioned that Afghanistan may in fact be the best (or perhaps the worst) example of how much needs to be done to explain to Canadians and other

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<sup>16</sup> See Jakobsen, 134.

<sup>17</sup> UNDPKO Website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/>.

Westerners what creating peace really means. As a result, participants agreed that the media should inform the debate on the war in Afghanistan. The media should also help to explain to Canadians the difference between what Canada is doing in Afghanistan, and what UN peacekeeping could do in Darfur to help end the violence. Moreover, Dunne argued that the Canadian public could be better served if there were more staff in the news room, and if those staff members were able to learn about the issues on which they report. Issues surrounding governance, international development and emerging democracies are not simple to understand and they require a knowledge of history, politics and international affairs. In his view, too many journalists are not given the time and the resources to adequately cover these issues.

Support for peacekeeping by the Canadian public is closely linked to the support from the media; without the media's cooperation, support for peacekeeping could disappear. Why should Canadians be interested in the DRC, Liberia or Haiti? In answering this question, participants acknowledged the importance of finding ways to spark the interest of the Canadian public by taking a Canadian angle and making stories relevant to the Canadian public. Personalizing stories, with for example specific references to Canadian troops or personnel, can help to generate more interest. As mentioned above, international correspondents must also be equipped with an ability to relate and describe the context to their viewers. While the media should focus on shaping and personalizing its stories, one participant also noted that the local populations have a responsibility in educating themselves and creating a demand vis-à-vis the media. In the participant's view, local populations are the first level of engagement for the media.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

Overall, participants recognized the media's crucial responsibility toward the public and agreed that journalists and media practitioners should continue to ensure objective news reporting and uphold high standards of accuracy and accountability. In the end, it is crucial that the United Nations and governments involved in peace efforts focus on making the media part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.

Many themes and directions for future work emerged from the October 5<sup>th</sup> event. These are presented below.

Recommendations to the United Nations DPKO:

1. DPKO should explore ways in which the media can promote a peaceful resolution to challenges. For example:
  - a. DPKO could explore the use of media to foster a national dialogue between the government, rebel leaders, and the local population.
  - b. DPKO could explore the use of media to promote and manage expectations DDR programmes, the rule of law, human rights, etc.
2. DPKO should promote greater involvement by the media in reporting on military, civil, and humanitarian affairs in peacekeeping missions as a way to benefit the wider understanding of peacekeeping.

3. DPKO should encourage the media, including journalists and reporters, to take part in peacekeeping missions. This could be achieved by:
  - a. Exploring opportunities for embedding journalists within UN missions.
  - b. Facilitating the travel and transport of journalists by giving them greater access to UN flights and giving them the option of being accompanied by UN troops.
  - c. Providing translators and interpreters.
4. DPKO should explore different ways to promote and reach mainstream and alternative-media reporters that have an interest in peacekeeping missions.
5. DPKO should encourage the media to highlight both successes and problems with UN peacekeeping. Highlighting successes could put political pressure where necessary and help gain support for specific missions, while highlighting problems could help to tell UN Member states that the UN needs more help.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT**

1. The Government of Canada should promote initiatives to train Canadian journalists on issues of peace and security.
2. The Government of Canada should promote the presence of Canadian journalists in missions where Canadian troops and personnel are present.
3. The Government of Canada should help raise public awareness and understanding of UN peacekeeping missions and of Canada's role in Afghanistan. For example, departments of the Government of Canada (i.e. Foreign Affairs, CIDA, DND and RCMP) involved in peacekeeping missions could:
  - a. Promote and support public dialogues on UN peacekeeping missions and on Canada's role in Afghanistan.
  - b. Partner with Canadian media, NGOs, civil society, and universities to help Canadians understand the role of UN peacekeeping, as well as the similarities and differences between UN peacekeeping missions and Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.
4. Public Affairs sections across departments of the Government of Canada involved in peacekeeping missions could coordinate media strategies to streamline messages and effectively impact Canadian domestic media.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRESSURE GROUPS<sup>18</sup>**

1. Civil society and NGOs should continue to provide backgrounders and factsheets focused on specific peacekeeping issues, to facilitate journalists' research.
2. Civil society and NGOs working on peacekeeping issues should promote peacekeeping missions by speaking on their behalf to politicians, by producing op-eds, as well as talking points.
3. Civil society should coordinate media strategies with the military as a means to achieve their goals. Doing so involves defining their objectives and mandate to come up with common messages.
4. Universities and schools of journalism should explore the possibilities for developing mentorship programmes whereby journalists from Canada share their expertise and techniques with journalists from post-conflict societies.
5. NGOs, universities and schools of journalism could help to track and monitor news stories. Doing so would help in understanding how news media is being portrayed and even distorted depending on the source.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO NEWS BROADCASTERS**

1. News broadcasters should ensure that their international correspondents are equipped with the ability to relate and describe the context there are covering to their viewers. For example:
  - a. News broadcasters should promote the 'education' of journalists on peacekeeping and military affairs.
  - b. News broadcasters should invest more resources in strengthening their capacity to cover international news, particularly stories in conflict zones.

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<sup>18</sup> While these recommendations are targeted primarily at Canadian civil society and NGOs, they can also apply to civil society and NGOs around the world.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS

1. Media should look at strategies and partnership between them and the UN, as a means to enhance understanding on the part of the media. Such partnership could also help in building strategies for disseminating targeted messages. For example:
  - a. Media could play a role in making sure troop contributing countries know that the UN is thankful for their support and that their sustained engagement is required.
  - b. Media could increase awareness with respect to UN missions and let donors know that peacekeeping operations need more financial contributions.
2. Media should provide equal weight to the successes and problems of peacekeeping. Doing so could help to foster support for peacekeeping missions, at the same time as contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of peacekeeping.
3. Media should allocate time and resources to get the story, use limited time for a story to provide context, and explore creative ways of delivering messages.
4. Media should explore ways to shape its message in a way that it is relevant to the people they are targeting. For example, Canadian media should explore ways to shape their messages in a way that is relevant to Canadians. One way of doing so is by personalizing the story, by making specific references to Canadians and by directly linking what is going on abroad to the lives of individual Canadians.
5. Media should watch out for ‘spins’ by balancing evidence with human interest stories.
6. Media should provide links to documents, so that people can follow up with a story by reading the report.
7. Media should emphasize the importance of evidence and should not take information at face value. Journalists need to be engaged; when not given all information, they need to know why.
8. Media should take advantage of the expertise and knowledge of NGOs that work alongside peacekeeping missions.