



Savvy and trusting interaction created
a productive learning environment for
United Nations Military Experts
in Mission Course 2/ 2017 at FINCENT



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**United Nations Military Experts in Mission Course
2/ 2017 at FINCENT**

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FOREWORD

Armed conflicts around the world cause social development to deteriorate in war-torn communities and women and children are particularly at risk. These new age conflicts have several typical features: non-governmental fighters, conflict taking place within a country rather than between countries, an increased level of human rights violations and civilians being likely to be the victims of the conflicts.

These victims have the right for protection and the United Nations Human security concept highlights this altered way of thinking about security, with a move away from nation-based security that was focused on before towards human security. This human security must be analysed in its cultural, historical and political contexts.

These individual differences in the need for human security demand that the different kinds of protection from UN Blue Helmets take into account that particularly vulnerable groups, such as women and children need to receive special attention.

The training and education of crisis management personnel can serve as a basis for learning cross-cultural awareness. To make sure the cultural, religious and political dimensions of conflicts can be fully addressed and learned from on FINCENT's United Nations Military Experts in Mission Course 2/ 2017 (UNMEM) courses, we are dependent on nations sending their military personnel with different backgrounds to FINCENT. Every participant on a UNMEM course and his/her cultural background has an impact on their estimation and perception of our training situations simulating real field missions and together with the instructors they create the learning atmosphere from which everybody benefits. This learning environment with its wider analysis, understanding, required time arranged for open conversation and explicit analysis of cultural differences is what new conflicts demand from all Blue Helmets.

FINCENT wants to combine research and training to achieve a better understanding of training and education requirements. Now we have the opportunity to try to fulfil those demands. FINCENT has a new task to act as the Head of Comprehensive Crisis Management Research of the Finnish National Defence University. The first joint research projects have been initiated. This task also supports FINCENT's task of acting as the Department Head of NATO Military Contribution of Peace Support.

On our latest UNMEM course 2/2017 in August, the majority of trainees were women, which opens up possibilities for them to be deployed in any ongoing UN operation to cooperate and coordinate with local women in the conflict area. With

their collaboration skills, these trained women are a great asset and reinforce FINCENT's goal of being able to achieve better learning outcomes with our trainees.

It is obvious that FINCENT cannot execute any activities without the support of national and international actors. All this was made possible by the following countries sending trainers to FINCENT: Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Switzerland. We at FINCENT are looking forward to developing the training and education of our instructors. We are trying to find solutions to how we could train and educate instructors to use more effective methods, for example, by using a wider spectrum of embedded training solutions. It is also very important that instructors understand and accept FINCENT's new pedagogical ideas on how to support the students in achieving their learning objectives more effectively.

Special thanks for sponsoring female officers to participate UNMEM 2/2017 go to:

Australia sponsoring Chad, Ghana, El-Salvador, Tanzania, Senegal and Zimbabwe

Canada sponsoring Benin, Ghana and Nigeria

Finland sponsoring Uganda, Malawi and Senegal

Norway sponsoring Malawi and Zambia

UK sponsoring Senegal

Commander (SG) Jukka-Pekka Schroderus
Commandant of FINCENT

OBSERVATIONS FROM UNITED NATIONS MILITARY EXPERTS IN MISSION COURSE 2/ 2017

Preface

In cooperation with Nordic Defence Cooperation NORDEFCO and the Crisis Management Center Finland, the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre FINCENT organized the first United Nations Military Experts in Mission Course (UNMEM) ever where the majority, 25 out of the 46 participants were female. I was invited to conduct an observation analysis of the course from the perspective of learning.

Reflecting the course from the perspective of learning, the main finding of this unstructured observation supports the group composition being somewhat half female, half male. Thus a gender-balanced group with a combination of cultural knowledge and multi-faceted capacities creates a learning environment expedient to future United Nations Military Observers (UNMO) training aiming to increase operational effectiveness in United Nations Peacekeeping.

The natural observations made during UNMEM 2/2017 invite further multidisciplinary research of diverse study designs for empowering women in peacekeeping. In particular, a more profound understanding of the practical ways female officers support more efficient peacekeeping operations, especially in sensitive matters, cannot be overemphasized.

In Helsinki, 24.09.2017

Minna Ruolanto

MA (Adult Education), PhD Candidate of the Finnish National Defence University

SAVVY AND TRUSTING INTERACTION CREATED A PRODUCTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR UNMEM 2/2017

Abstract

The United Nations Military Experts on Mission (UNMEM) course aims to prepare Military Officers for service as United Nations' Military Observers, Military Liaison Officers or Military Advisors in any ongoing or future United Nations peacekeeping operations.

This report reflects on the experiences of UNMEM 2/2017 arranged by the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre FINCENT in cooperation with Nordic Defence Cooperation NORDEFKO and the Crisis Management Center Finland between 4 August and 1 September 2017. This was the first UNMEM course ever where the majority of the participants were female. Therefore, I was invited to conduct an observation analysis of the course looking to answer the question of how the new course composition reflects on learning.

In practice, the UNMEM aim is to generally prepare the participant for duties in a peacekeeping operation so that he/she can fulfil the military aspects of UN peacekeeping mandates in accordance with DPKO principles and guidelines, perform his/her duties in an effective, professional and integrated manner and demonstrate the core values and competencies of the United Nations (see: UN Ref. 2016.25, Annex J, UNSCR 2242/2015, UN Ref. 2010.30, FINCENT 2017). These principles and guidelines were used as the backbone of the observation process.

The main observation from UNMEM 2/2017 was that the course instructors and students together created a learning environment where all students had the possibility to learn and grow professionally. From the student performance perspective, it is notable that individual team skills as well as proficiency in the English language played a major role in the overall learning process. In short, the experiences from UNMEM 2/2017 strongly suggest that group composition should be 50% males and 50% female.

Performance and the learning process under the spotlight of the observation

In this unstructured observation study, the **United Nations Military Observers (UNMO) Skill Set Requirements** (UN Ref. 2016.25, Annex J) were generally reflected in the detectable behaviour and action of the participants both during classroom and outdoor sessions. In addition, the spontaneous and unofficial discussions with the participants and instructors as well as the formal feedback are noted in this report.

The above-mentioned UNMO Skill Set Requirements (UN Ref. 2016.25, Annex J, UNSCR 2242/2015) concerning professional skills and competences in short are as follows:

- Observation and Monitoring
- Verification and Investigation
- Negotiation and Mediation
- Information Collection and Interpretation
- Knowledge of Important United Nations Policy Documents
- Communication Skills
- Driving
- Equipment Handling
- Cultural and Situational Awareness
- First Aid

In addition, the UNMO requirements include team skills, temperament and interpersonal skills, patience and ability to assess and report together with uncommon courage and commitment. Also acting with impartiality, maturity, high ethical standards, honesty, trustworthiness and complying with policies, rules and regulations, instructions, procedures and directives issued by UNHQ and the mission is fundamental. (See: UN Ref. 2016.25.) Therefore, the above-mentioned skills were also under direct observation.

This report is adapting the concept of a flash report noting only the observations within view. All field notes of observations were taken anonymously, and the observations as well as the analysis are limited to the researcher's interpretive frames. The participants were informed about this survey analysis during the opening ceremony on Monday 24 August 2017.

Introduction

The UN Security Council called upon the Secretary-General to initiate, in collaboration with Member States, a revised strategy within existing resources to double the numbers of women in the military and police contingents of UN peacekeeping operations over the next five years (UNSCR 2242/2015).

Women's participation in the military component of peace operations has been recognized as a critical factor contributing to mission success, both in the UN normative frameworks on peacekeeping and women, peace and security, including several Security Council resolutions (UNSCR 2242/2015), as well as by commanders on the ground themselves.

Women peacekeepers broaden the range of skills and capacities among all categories of personnel, enhance the operational effectiveness of all tasks, and improve the mission's image, accessibility and credibility vis-à-vis the local population (see: Allred 2006; Bratt 2002; Bridges & Horsfall 2009; Enloe 2001; Hagen 2006; Karim & Beardsley 2017; Skjelsbaek 2001; see also: Mutanen (ed.) 2017). Therefore, the UN requested FINCENT to arrange an UNMEM course with half of the students being women and the course content being the same as in previous courses.

The United Nations Military Experts on Mission (UNMEM) course aims to prepare Military Officers for service as United Nations' Military Observers, Military Liaison Officers or Military Advisors in any ongoing or future United Nations peacekeeping operations. The course training objective is to generally prepare the participants for duties in a peacekeeping operation so that they can fulfil the military aspects of the UN peacekeeping mandates in accordance with DPKO principles and guidelines, perform their duties in an effective, professional and integrated manner, and demonstrate the core values and competences of the United Nations. (FINCENT 2017.)

The 46 (25 female, 21 male) UNMEM 2/2017 course participants represented the following 21 countries: Austria, Benin, Bhutan, Chad, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Republic of Korea, Malawi, Nigeria, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sweden, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Instructors represented Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

Overall learning process and performance supported by psychological safety

The most crucial observation of the UNMEM 2/2017 course is that the course curriculum did not differentiate sexes and as it is, it is suitable for both male and female officers. The curricula and practical solutions supported individual professional growth for students, regardless of sex, with different backgrounds and future orientations.

Overall, the course was characterized by both instructors and the participants together creating a learning atmosphere supporting *psychological safety* that consists of taken-for-granted beliefs about how others will respond when one puts oneself on the line, such as by asking a question, seeking feedback, reporting a mistake, or proposing a new idea (see: Edmondson 1999, 2004). During the course, everyone was involved in the exercises and it was natural to both ask questions and get answers. In general, the atmosphere reflected a realistic operational environment where the successful teamwork is experienced as empowering – and deficient teamwork frustrating.

Naturalistic observation (i.e. unstructured observation) involves studying the spontaneous behaviour of participants in natural surroundings. According to naturalistic observations made during the course, some female participants spontaneously expressed feelings of being seen and treated as equal within the group. This happened for the first time during the Santahamina week when the class discussed UN standards of conduct and values. The discussion about sensitive issues, such as harassment, sexual abuse and power balance was trusting and supported psychological safety and confidence building among the students.

In general, in the best performing teams the workload had been carefully managed: it was visible that the team had taken each member's skills and strengths into consideration when planning how to conduct the day's tasks. Especially in sensitive tasks, these teams used female officers' capacity to encounter a local person in a difficult situation. Moreover, in these teams the female officers handled the challenging negotiation exercises where the role players were questioned on private matters like motherhood remarkably well.

In turn, the teams where the participants felt they were not achieving the set goals were challenged by inadequate English language skills as well as strong individual task orientation overruling the realistic resources available. In other words, sometimes strongly operationally oriented soldiers seemed to forget what they in practice were involved with: an UNMO is not a combat soldier. For example, perceiving time and other people, including locals and representatives of other organizations, as a resource in problem solving seemed to be forgotten in these cases.

As the course curriculum is demanding, there was a lot for the students to digest. Long working hours simulated the operational environment and truly tested the participants' action competence. Therefore, the constructive progressive curricula including repetition of the main learning objectives and supported the learning process in general. In addition, the long days measured the participants' patience and genuine respect for diversity in practice.

The fact that the course curriculum was not changed from the previous one was a relevant factor behind female empowerment. This in practice enabled female officers to be encountered as equal with their male colleagues: everyone participated on the course as equals and the tasks were divided according to the skills of the individuals, not according to gender. The individuals motivated in learning truly seemed to grow professionally in many ways.

Furthermore, the experienced instructors noted that the fact that female officers worked hard during the course encouraged the male officers to put their hearts into learning in a new way, too.



Our mind is like a parachute – works best when open

Altogether, this course underlined the importance of team skills as well as respect for diversity among the UNMOs. In practice, for some students it requires unlearning from using combat skills and the SOPs of the home country as tools in problem solving; for some it means putting little more effort into learning the SOPs of safe and appropriate patrolling and reporting procedures in a set time frame.

Therefore, the experiences from this course highlight three skills eminently: sufficient *language* and *driving* skills combined with genuine *capacity to reflect* personal performance as an UNMO team member (see: UN Ref. 2010.30).

To participate and learn during a course conducted in English, preparing the individual to work in a mission with English as the operative language, working language skills are an unconditional premise. Lack of sufficient skills inhibit an otherwise competent person's usability in operative tasks which leads to uneven daily workload in the respective team and in the longer perspective compromised situational awareness when one person is not able to contribute his/her observations to the shared view.

As an UNMO's work is based on patrolling and moving about around the area of operation, confidence in driving is essential (UN Ref. 2010.30; UN Ref. 2016.25). Deficient driving skills, including the use of maps and other equipment available for observation, also materialize as uneven workload within the team as well as compromised situational awareness when the person's focus is on operating the vehicle. In addition, the practical exercises highlighted the importance of knowing the area of operation and capacity to pinpoint one's own team on the map at any time.

However, this course also pointed out the meaning of genuine individual capacity to reflect on one's own behaviour and values. As an UNMO always works in an international team and for people in a foreign country, the capacity to respect diversity cannot be overemphasized. An individual with high class technical skills but a prominent need to mature in patience and interpersonal skills, is working at least as far from the intended task as the individual lacking English language skills.

In all, based on the observations and feedback of the UNMEM 2/2017 arranged at FINCENT, I strongly recommend continuing to organize courses where half the students are male and half female in the future, too. Also, working together with CMC Finland's civilian monitor and adviser students was a true asset. As one student spontaneously noted, this sort of group composition provides learning that cannot be found in books: understanding other people and foreign cultures and the work in complex mission environments is best learnt in practice, together with people different from you.

Closing remarks

As this report is adapting the concept of a flash report noting only the observations within view, the experiences of UNMEM 2/2017 invite further research into diverse study designs for empowering women in peacekeeping. In particular, I would like to point out that multidisciplinary studies looking to understand the practical ways female officers support more efficient peacekeeping operations, especially in sensitive matters, cannot be overemphasized. Most of the female officers that participated on the course wanted to be deployed and their experiences from the operations would certainly raise interesting research questions.

A concrete way of understanding future training needs better would be a study focusing on demonstrating the perceived image of an ideal UNMO among the participants. This would open an interesting perspective on the schemas and identity of the officers. How does the image of an ideal, masculine combat soldier reflect the ideal of an UNMO? Does this image support the future needs of the peacekeeping operations or is there a need for an update? In addition, the

perception of an ideal UNMO could be entangled to social relationships both among the UNMEM course participants as well as the UNMO teams on mission and that angle could be looked at more carefully.

In addition, the premises of UNMOs should be studied also from the perspective of learning to deal with hostile situations, to understand how these exercises could be designed to support the best possible learning outcome. The natural observations showed a glimpse of significant variation how the training was perceived. Some participants experienced the same exercise to be too easy while others felt remarkably uncomfortable. Therefore, understanding how the students' cultural and personal background resonates in the practical exercises would bring valuable knowledge in designing the pedagogical frame of future UNMEM courses.

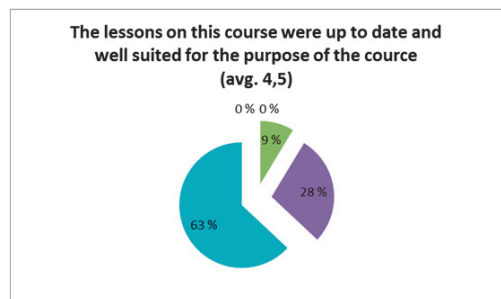
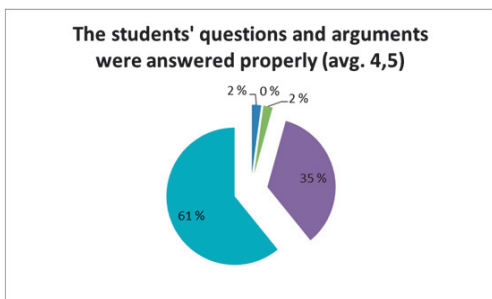
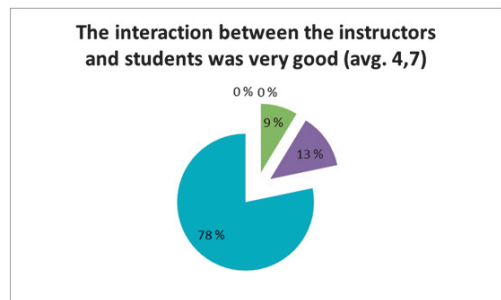
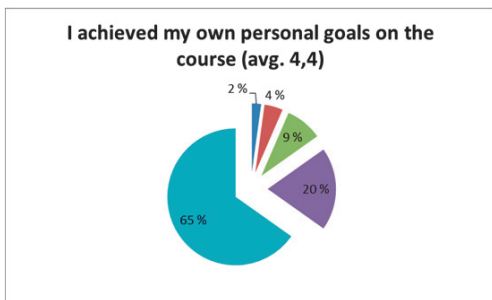
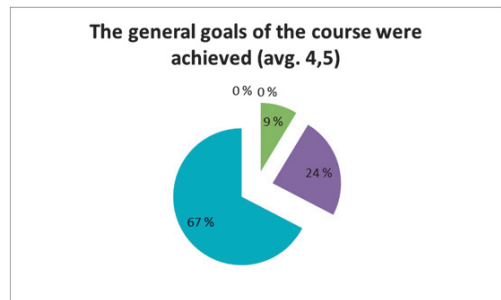
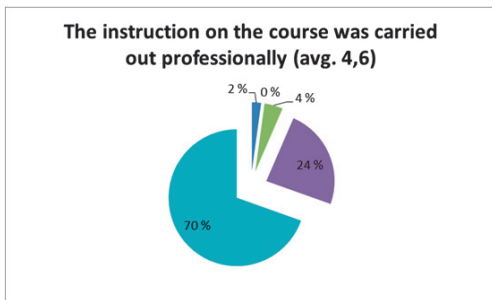
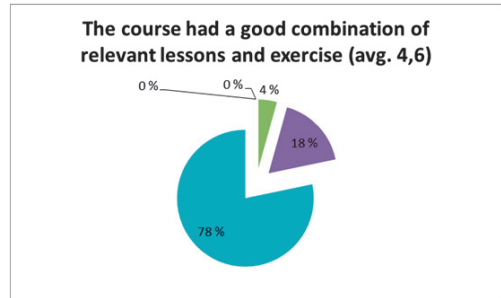
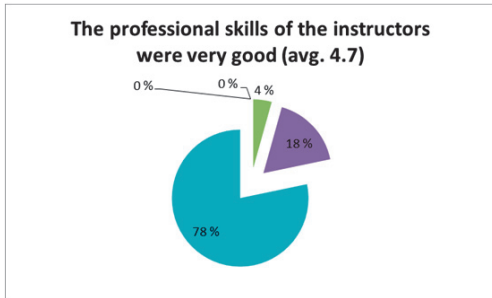
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Trainees responded to the statements using a rating scale with response options from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (fully agree). The average trainee ranking in the evaluation was 4.5 for the whole UNMEM 2/2017 course. The evaluation shows that the trainees were satisfied with the course. The feeling that trainees achieved the general goals of the course (evaluation 4.5) as well as their own personal goals (evaluation 4.4) was at a very high level.





Finnish Defence Forces International Centre

P.O.Box 7, 00861 HELSINKI

Finland

Tel. +358 299 800

fincen.fi

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