

Towards Sustainable Peace: Integrating Environmental Literacy in UN Peacekeeping Missions

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Abstract

The intricate relationship between peacekeeping operations and the preservation of the environment has gained recognition in recent years. Conflict-affected regions, such as the Central African Republic (CAR), Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), have frequently witnessed environmental degradation and the exploitation of natural resources during conflicts. The peacekeepers deployed in these three nations constitute more than 62% of global deployments. Providing environmental education to these individuals could have a significant positive impact on the environment. It is crucial to address environmental literacy within UN peacekeeping missions to prevent further damage and rehabilitate affected ecosystems. Prolonged conflicts often cause severe ecological degradation, hindering long-term peace efforts. This article explores the strong connection between peacekeeping efforts and environmental issues, showcasing the influential role the environment plays in shaping conflict dynamics and the challenges faced during peacebuilding. There is a need for climate and environmental literacy and awareness among UN peacekeepers. This article aims to highlight the importance of climate and environmental literacy in UN peacekeeping operations and its potential to contribute to global peace and sustainable development.

Key words: *UN Peacekeeping, Climate, Environmental literacy, Conflict, Global Security.*

I. Introduction

Environmental literacy involves possessing the information, skills, and tactics to address ecological, economic, and social issues. This article will explain why climate literacy is important and needed and present case studies of three UN peacekeeping missions.

The case study of UNMISS (United Nations Mission in South Sudan) offers insight into environmental literacy initiatives and outcomes compared to ongoing missions like MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and MINUSCA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic).

The initial environmental policies focused on minimizing the ecological footprint of the mission's operations, including guidelines for waste management, water usage, and energy consumption in UNMISS. However, there were implementation failures due to limited resources, inadequate local infrastructure, or insufficient personnel training.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and

The Number of UN Personnel deployed in the following regions:

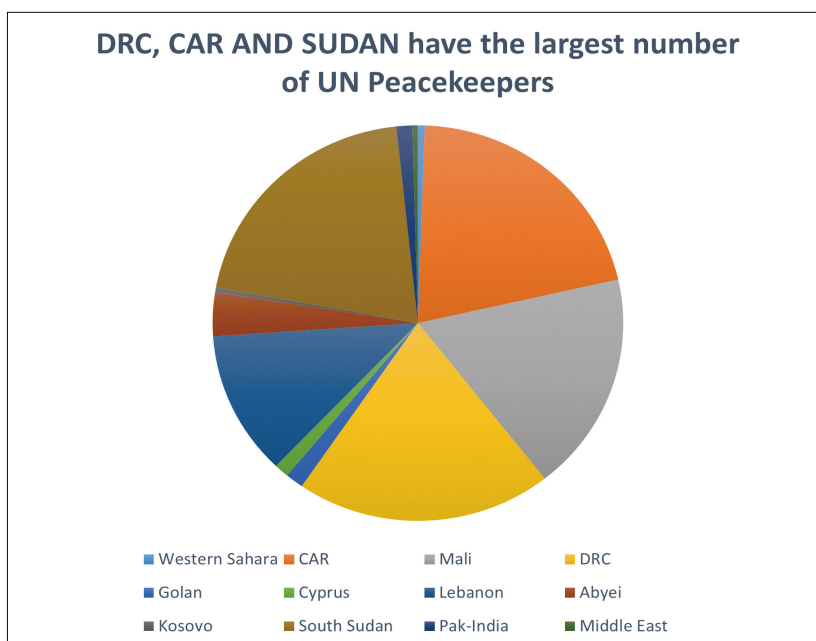
Countries	Missions	Number of UN Personnel deployed	%
Western Sahara	MINURSO	469	0.5%
CAR	MINUSCA	18,420	21.2%
Mali	MINUSMA	15,779	18.1%
DRC	MONUSCO	17,753	20.4%
Golan	UNDOF	1,256	1.4%
Cyprus	UNFYCIP	1,011	1.2%
Lebanon	UNIFIL	10,365	11.9%
Abyei	UNSIFA	3,156	3.6%
Kosovo	UNMIK	352	0.4%
South Sudan	UNMISS	17,954	20.6%
Pak-India	UNMOGIP	110	0.1%
Middle East	UNTSO	380	0.4%
Total		87,071	

Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en>

the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) are three of the largest UN peacekeeping missions, with around 55,000 UN personnel deployed.¹⁾

Peacekeepers deployed in these missions (MINUSCA, MONUSCO, and UNMISS) make up 62% of the total UN peacekeepers.

These missions are characterized by their protracted nature. Many of these regions have experienced long-term conflicts, and the presence of UN personnel in



these areas has extended over several years. Environmental literacy can play a pivotal role in ensuring the post-conflict transition towards a more sustainable future.²⁾

Environmental literacy is vital in peacekeeping missions to ensure long-term sustainability, as it helps peacekeepers understand and address environmental impact and equips them with the knowledge and skills to implement eco-friendly strategies effectively. Without this awareness, peacekeepers may unintentionally engage in unsustainable activities such as overexploitation of local resources, incorrect waste disposal, and habitat degradation, which can lead to serious

1) CEOBS. "Armed Conflict, Environmental Protection and the Sustainable Development Goals," February 2, 2016. <https://ceobs.org/armed-conflict-environmental-protection-and-the-sustainable-development-goals/>.

2) Analytics, F. P. "Environment, Fragility & Conflict." Foreign Policy, n.d. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/12/environment-fragility-and-conflict/>.

ecological and social consequences that can undermine the larger goals of peacekeeping operations.

UN missions have been accused of exploiting the natural resources in host nations, leading to direct and indirect exploitation, pollution, and environmental degradation. The lack of environmental literacy among UN peacekeepers is a primary reason for these negative effects. This underscores the importance of addressing environmental concerns in peacekeeping deployments to mitigate negative consequences and preserve long-term viability.

For example, insufficient waste management procedures in UNMISS led to local contamination while the movement and operations of vehicles and machinery contribute to air and noise pollution. These negative environmental impacts can undermine the mission's relationship with the host community and long-term sustainability, emphasizing the need for sustainable practices within peacekeeping operations.

Understanding the connection between the environment and peacekeeping requires comprehension of three main concepts: environment, natural resources, and cultural resources.

The environment encompasses physical surroundings like climate, geography, geology, resources, wildlife, and human beings along with their interrelations. Climate change is not solely a matter of human security; rather, it is fundamentally reshaping security dynamics.

Natural resources are essential sources of life and well-being, including renewable and non-renewable resources such as water, air, soil, land, trees, and minerals.

Cultural resources include tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Without protection of both natural and cultural resources, a peaceful environment cannot be sustained.³⁾

The environment affects humans and life. Conversely, human activities along with technological advancement affect the environment, leading to pollution, global warming, climate change, and resource scarcity, all of which can result in conflicts.

Many conflict worldwide have been fueled by competition for resources. For example, Sudan has faced civil conflicts and poor economic resource management, leading to current wars and insecurity.

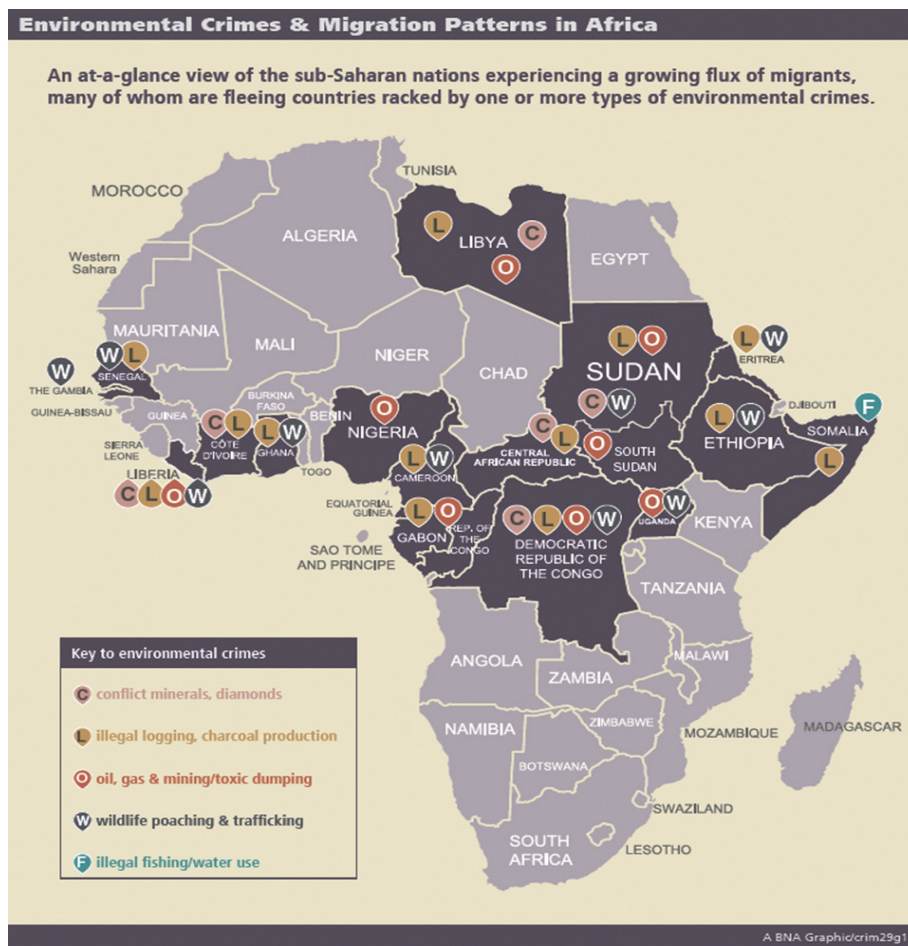
The conflict in the Congo has been fueled by a complex combination of geopolitics, national and ethnic rivalries, and competition over the region's natural resources. The Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced frequent violence due to factors such as control of the diamond mines, disputes over livestock, dissatisfaction among minority groups, and the lack of a functioning⁴⁾ government

3) Forti, Daniel, and Emmanuelle Cousin. "Contingent-Owned Equipment and Environmental Considerations in UN Peacekeeping Operations." JSTOR, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep43843>.

4) climate-laws.org. "National Environment Policy 2015-2025 - Climate Change Laws of the

since colonial times.

Many peacekeepers have been deployed in these Central Africa regions, often working in the world's most remote areas with minimal infrastructure. Most peacekeeping missions must generate their own electricity and manage supply chains, which can result in greenhouse gas emissions and potential soil pollution. These activities also produce significant solid waste, require both potable and non-potable water, and generate wastewater.



Source: Jacinth Planer, "Map Highlights Environmental and Natural Resource Crimes in Africa," The Enough Project, October 13, 2015, <https://enoughproject.org/blog/map-highlights-environmental-and-natural-resource-crimes-africa>.

World," n.d. https://climate-laws.org/document/national-environment-policy-2015-2025_b36c.

If not managed properly, these practices can impact the host country's ecology, leading to adverse environmental conditions and influencing migration patterns. This is illustrated in the map below.

II. Environmental Literacy

Environmental literacy, which refers to the ability to make sustainable decisions and grasp how environmental challenges relate to peace and stability⁵⁾ is crucial in the context of peacekeeping and host state policies. Promoting environmental literacy among peacekeepers and indigenous populations is essential for enabling sustainable activities and minimizing environmental impacts. Peacekeepers who are concerned with the environment are better able to plan their activities sustainably, leave a smaller environmental footprint, and support local environmental initiatives.⁶⁾ The environmental literacy of indigenous populations can make it easier for them to participate in embracing sustainable practices.⁷⁾

It is important to recognize that peacekeeping operations can have a significant impact on the environment more than on the local population. Peacekeepers operating in various regions must understand how environmental stressors, such as water scarcity and food insecurity, can escalate tensions and trigger conflicts. Climate and environmental literacy provide UN peacekeepers with the tools to recognize these connections and implement strategies to prevent, mitigate, and resolve such crises.⁸⁾

A. Preventing Resource Competition; Peacekeeping Missions and Sustainability

Vulnerable populations, often disproportionately affected by climate change, are

5) Reuveny, Rafael, Andreea S Mihalache-O'Keef, and Quan Li. "The Effect of Warfare on the Environment." *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 6 (2010): 749–61. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20798961>.

6) Borel, Rolain, Erin McCandless, and Mohammed Abu-Nimer. "Environment and Natural Resource-Related Conflicts: Moving towards Transformational Approaches." *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 3, no. 1 (2006): 1–5. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48603332>.

7) Francis, Robert A., and Krishna Krishnamurthy. "Human Conflict and Ecosystem Services: Finding the Environmental Price of Warfare." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 90, no. 4 (2014): 853–69. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24538201>

8) "Developing National Sustainable Development Strategies That Promote Stability and Peacebuilding Development Account Project (ROA 105) Strengthening National Capacity for the Integration of Sustainable Development Strategies in Countries Emerging from Conflict United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs -Division for Sustainable Development," 2012. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1040NSDS%20and%20Peacebuilding%20Training%20Manual%20\(ROA-105\)%20revised%20by%20Jenny%201104.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1040NSDS%20and%20Peacebuilding%20Training%20Manual%20(ROA-105)%20revised%20by%20Jenny%201104.pdf).

particularly at high risk in conflict zones. Peacekeepers need to be equipped with the knowledge to protect and support these communities. Climate and environmental literacy helps peacekeepers understand the unique vulnerabilities of these populations and tailor their responses accordingly to ensure their safety and well-being.

Peacekeepers should keep in mind that UN peacekeeping operations can impact the environment in ways such as their vehicles producing soil pollution and local people needing water from the same ground. The amount of water and food needed and wasted by civilians must be monitored by peacekeepers.

Resource competition is a driver of conflict and is closely linked to environmental factors. To prevent resource competition and promote sustainability, peacekeepers must be trained to manage and mediate disputes over resources effectively while promoting sustainable practices. Climate and environmental literacy empowers peacekeepers to address resource-related conflicts and work towards preventing conflicts triggered by resource scarcity, ultimately contributing to the protection of civilians.⁹⁾

B. Sustainable Peacekeeping Operations

Sustainable peacekeeping operations involve minimizing the ecological footprint and adhering to sustainable practices to preserve the environments in which peacekeepers operate. Climate and environmental literacy enable peacekeepers to understand the environmental consequences of their actions and adopt sustainable approaches that not only promote peace but also protect the planet.

Local communities are essential allies in efforts to maintain peace. Peacekeepers can foster trust and cooperation with these communities by displaying dedication to environmental preservation and sustainability. Climate and environmental literacy can improve the ability of peacekeepers to interact with and win the support of local residents, helping peacekeepers understand the local environment and the cultural value of natural resources.¹⁰⁾

C. Armed Conflict and Environment

Armed conflicts, which peacekeepers work to end, can cause significant environmental harm, including deforestation, pollution, and the eviction of local

9) “ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY for PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS and FIELD-BASED SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS,” 2022. https://operationalsupport.un.org/sites/default/files/dos_2022.01_environmental_policy_for_peacekeeping_operations_and_special_political_missions.pdf.

10) “Protecting the Environment during Armed Conflict: An Inventory and Analysis of International Law.” UNEP - UN Environment Programme, September 16, 2017. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/protecting-environment-during-armed-conflict-inventory-and-analysis-international>.

residents. These environmental repercussions may last for a very long time and affect both the environment and people.¹¹⁾

The maintenance of peace is essential for environmental sustainability, enabling the implementation of environmental regulations, conservation initiatives, and the reduction of the conflict's related negative effects on the environment.¹²⁾

III. Impact of the Host State Environmental Policies on Peacekeeping

The environmental policies of the host states can have a significant impact on peacekeeping operations. Policies that promote resource management and sustainability can help in achieving mission objectives, address the root causes of resource conflicts and environmental deterioration, and assist in preventing and resolving conflicts. Following a conflict in the host states needing to rebuild their cultures and infrastructure, effective environmental rules can also control sustainable rebuilding operations, thereby reducing the environmental impacts of recovery.

However, the relationship between environmental sustainability, peacekeeping operations, and host state environmental legislation is intricate and interdependent. Peacekeepers often deal with issues of scarce resources, awareness, and coordination, and implementing environmental policy in peacekeeping operations may face challenges such as lack of funding, conflicting objectives, logistical difficulties, low awareness, quick deployment times, and an emphasis on pressing issues.

To overcome these challenges, peacekeepers can use environmental literacy to make appropriate plans and raise awareness of sustainable development. Since they will ultimately be in charge of everything after the conflict, involving the host state and the local population is crucial in maintaining peace and reintegrating them into society while maintaining environmental sustainability.¹³⁾

11) Forti, Daniel, and Emmanuelle Cousin. "Contingent-Owned Equipment and Environmental Considerations in UN Peacekeeping Operations." JSTOR, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep43843>.

12) Asiedu, Charlotte. "Environmental Review of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations for Sustainability, Kivu, DR Congo," 2010. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1312150/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

13) "From Conflict to Sustainable Development: Assessment and Clean up in Serbia and Montenegro." UNEP - UN Environment Programme, September 16, 2017. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/conflict-sustainable-development-assessment-and-clean-serbia-and-montenegro>.

A. Environment Policies by the Host States¹⁴⁾

Firstly, CAR is a landlocked country in Central Africa with significant natural resources and ecosystems. Recognizing the importance of environmental conservation and sustainable development, the CAR government has implemented several national policies such as the National Environmental Policy, Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation laws, and Mining laws. It is crucial to remember that the implementation and efficacy of these policies may be limited.¹⁵⁾

- **National Environmental Policy:** There is a National Environmental Policy in effect in the Central African Republic. This policy offers a framework to address a range of environmental challenges, including biodiversity preservation, land use planning, and natural resource management.
- **Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation:** To preserve its distinctive ecosystems and wildlife, the CAR has established several protected areas and national parks. Threatened species are protected in these regions, and biodiversity is preserved. For instance, the Dzanga-Sangha Reserve is well-known for the diverse range of plants and animals it supports, such as gorillas and forest elephants.
- **Sustainable Logging Methods:** As a country with vast forests and wood resources, the government has enacted legislation to encourage sustainable logging methods and discourage illicit logging, aiming to address issues of forest degradation and deforestation.
- **Mining laws:** The CAR is well-known for its mining riches, which include diamonds and gold. Mining laws have been implemented to regulate the mining industry and minimize its negative effects on the environment and society.
- **Management of Water Resources:** The CAR recognizes effective management of water resources as crucial, particularly concerning waterways like the Ubangi River. The key issues include water quality, conservation, and management.
- **Climate Change Agreements and Initiatives:** The CAR has participated in international climate change agreements and initiatives, aligning with the Paris Agreement by submitting its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The implementation and efficacy of these policies may be limited due to periods of political turmoil and conflict experienced by CAR, which can disrupt governance and hinder the enforcement of environmental regulations.¹⁶⁾

14) ebin.pub. "Brings Together New 2023 Papers." Accessed October 22, 2023.

<https://ebin.pub/existential-risks-in-peace-and-conflict-studies-3031243145-9783031243141.html>.

15) reliefweb.int. "Reducing the Environmental Footprint of Peacekeeping Operations - Central African Republic | ReliefWeb," September 18, 2018. <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/reducing-environmental-footprint-peacekeeping-operations>.

Secondly, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has made efforts to establish environmental policies. The country is rich in natural resources, including vast forests, minerals, and water bodies. Some of the key environmental policies and initiatives in the DRC include the National REDD+ Strategy, Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation, and Forestry and Sustainable Logging.¹⁷⁾ However, the effectiveness and implementation of these policies can vary. Preserving and sustainably managing these resources is critical for both environmental conservation and economic development.

- **National REDD+ Strategy:** The DRC has developed a National REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) Strategy to combat deforestation and forest degradation, aiming to enhance sustainable forest management and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the forest industry.
- **Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation:** A network of national parks and protected areas has been constructed to safeguard the DRC's distinctive and diverse ecosystems, including the well-known Virunga National Park, which protects endangered species like mountain gorillas.
- **Forestry and Sustainable Logging:** Initiatives to promote sustainable logging methods and regulate the forestry industry are in place to address the issue of illicit logging and ensure environmentally friendly logging practices.
- **Mining rules:** The DRC has implemented mining rules to manage the mining industry's significant mineral resources and mitigate its environmental impact, particularly in terms of soil and water contamination.¹⁸⁾
- **Water Resource Management:** The DRC acknowledges the importance of managing its extensive network of rivers and lakes, particularly in the context of hydropower projects, prioritizing water quality and conservation.
- **Climate Change Initiatives:** The DRC has also been involved in climate change initiatives and international agreements, submitting its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), under the Paris Agreement, that outlines its commitments to mitigate and adapt to climate change.¹⁹⁾

16) Instituto Igarapé. "Central African Republic: Historical Roots and Immediate Causes of Conflict," December 21, 2017. <https://igarape.org.br/en/republica-centro-africana-raizes-historicas-e-causas-imediatas-do-conflito/>. International Crisis Group. "Crisis Group." Crisis Group, 2019. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/>.

17) reliefweb.int. "From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment - World | ReliefWeb," February 20, 2009. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/conflict-peacebuilding-role-natural-resources-and-environment-0#:~:text=Integrating%20environment%20and%20natural%20resources>.

18) United Nations Peacekeeping. "Mine Action," 2019. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mine-action>.

19) Ifpri.org, 2021. <https://www.ifpri.org/topic/environment-and-natural-resources>.

It is important to note that the effectiveness and enforcement of these policies can vary across different regions of the DRC due to governance challenges, corruption, and infrastructure limitations.²⁰⁾

Finally, Sudan had some environmental programs and policies in place, but their success and efficiency depended on factors, including political instability and resource shortages. Like many other nations, Sudan recognizes the importance of environmental preservation and sustainable growth.

Sudan has established environmental programs and policies, including rules for sustainable management of its natural resources such as water supplies and forests. The nation has struggled with deforestation, particularly in areas like Darfur, and has sought to combat this issue through legislation. Sudan has designated protected areas and wildlife reserves, such as Dinder National Park and the Dinder-Mareng Reserve, to safeguard its distinctive ecosystems and fauna.

However, political instability and transitions, including the ousting of President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019, can impact the development and implementation of environmental policies in Sudan. Integrating environmental considerations into peacebuilding efforts in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the Central African Republic (CAR) is crucial due to the complex and interlinked conflicts in these regions.²¹⁾

- **Water Resource Management:** Sudan recognizes the importance of efficient water resource management given its extensive river systems. This comprises regulations and programs pertaining to hydropower, irrigation, and water quality. Sudan has participated in international climate change projects, such as the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), and is committed to combatting climate change as part of the Paris Agreement, submitting its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that outlines its pledges to combat climate change.
- **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):** To guarantee that environmental issues are incorporated into planning and decision-making processes, Sudan has adopted legislation for conducting environmental impact assessments for development projects.
- **Laws controlling wildlife protection and conservation:** Sudan has laws and regulations in place to preserve wildlife and prevent illegal wildlife trade and poaching.²²⁾

20) Environment, U. N. "African Ministerial Conference on the Environment." UNEP - UN Environment Programme, July 20, 2018. <https://www.unep.org/regions/africa/african-ministerial-conference-environment>.

21) Un.org. "UNMIS Background - United Nations Mission in the Sudan," 2019. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/unmis/background.shtml>.

22) Planer, Jacinth. "Map Highlights Environmental and Natural Resource Crimes in Africa." The

Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR) are crucial due to the complex and interlinked conflicts in these regions.²³⁾

B. Call for Action by the UN²⁴⁾

To prevent environmental degradation and achieve sustainable peace and security, the UN encourages governments, international organizations, and peacekeeping agencies to prioritize environmental literacy and policies in peacekeeping efforts. The UN also emphasizes the long-term benefits of a holistic approach to peace and security that includes environmental sustainability.

Incorporating environmental factors into peacebuilding efforts in these locations is crucial through a multifaceted strategy involving international organizations, local communities, particularly indigenous people, and governments.

Implementing environmental plans requires both bottom-up and top-down approaches simultaneously. The bottom-up approach means that the more peacekeepers are educated on the environment, the more awareness they can spread and control environmental degradation with the help of local bodies and the population.

In the post-conflict stage, it is important to sustain peace. That is where a bottom-up approach is needed. The local population at the grassroots level should be involved in decision-making and participate in devising solutions for sustainable development in the future. They have better knowledge about the environment, environmental policies, and challenges in that area. This will also prevent them from not following environmental policies and will further motivate them to sustain it. Environmental literacy of UN peacekeepers will help bring environmental awareness to the leaders of the host states.²⁵⁾

Enough Project, October 13, 2015. <https://enoughproject.org/blog/map-highlights-environmental-and-natural-resource-crimes-africa>.

23) Planer, Jacinth. "Map Highlights Environmental and Natural Resource Crimes in Africa." The Enough Project, October 13, 2015. <https://enoughproject.org/blog/map-highlights-environmental-and-natural-resource-crimes-africa>.

24) reliefweb.int. "From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment - World | ReliefWeb," February 20, 2009. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/conflict-peacebuilding-role-natural-resources-and-environment-0#:~:text=Integrating%20environment%20and%20natural%20resources>.

25) Unfccc.int. "Conflict and Climate," 2022. <https://unfccc.int/blog/conflict-and-climate>.

IV. The Past Successful Incorporation of Environmental Concerns into Peacebuilding

There have been instances where environmental concerns were successfully integrated into peacebuilding efforts. These instances highlight the benefits of incorporating environmental sustainability into post-conflict reconstruction and peacekeeping efforts:²⁶⁾

- **Liberia's Environmental Governance Program:**

After years of civil war, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) established an Environmental Governance Program in Liberia. The program aimed to rebuild the country's environmental governance structures, which included policies, regulations, and capacity building. By supporting sustainable land use, forestry management, and wildlife protection, it successfully incorporated environmental sustainability into the recovery process and address resource rivalry, which was one of the core reasons for the war. This helped achieve long-term peace and stability.

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina's Landmine Clearing and Environmental Restoration:**

Following the Bosnian War, landmines and explosive munitions posed a significant environmental and safety risk in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Hazardous Area Life-support Organization (HALO) Trust, a demining organization, launched a program to eliminate mines and restore the ecosystem, making the area safer for local populations and enabling agricultural and commercial development. By integrating environmental considerations with post-conflict rebuilding, the program promoted long-term peace and stability.²⁷⁾

- **Amazon Peace Park in Colombia:**

In Colombia, a struggle between the government, paramilitary organizations, and rebels caused severe environmental damage in the Amazon region, including deforestation and illicit mining. As part of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the creation of the "Amazon Peace Park" was proposed to protect the Amazon rainforest, engage local communities in conservation efforts, and address environmental damage caused by the conflict.

26) UN Environment. "UN Recognizes 10 Pioneering Initiatives That Are Restoring the Natural World," December 13, 2022. <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/un-recognizes-10-pioneering-initiatives-are-restoring-natural-world#:~:text=This%20World%20Restoration%20Flagship%20is>.

27) The HALO Trust. "The HALO Trust," 2019. <https://www.halotrust.org/>.

• **Iraqi Marshland Restoration:**

Following the Iraq War in 2003, efforts were made to restore the drained marshlands in the south of Iraq. The marshlands had been purposefully drained by Saddam Hussein's administration, with serious environmental and societal implications. Local communities and international organizations spearheaded restoration efforts to rebuild the marshlands and their ecosystems. This initiative not only helped the livelihoods of the local Marsh Arab inhabitants but also contributed to social stability.

• **Small Arms and Light Weapons Collection and Environmental Projects in Sierra Leone:**

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) combined small guns and light weapons collection programs with environmental activities in Sierra Leone. They provided disarmament incentives by offering tools and equipment for reforestation and agricultural initiatives. This approach reduced the availability of weapons while simultaneously supporting sustainable livelihoods, promoting post-conflict stability by connecting disarmament with environmental activities.

These examples present how incorporating environmental concerns into peacebuilding initiatives may successfully address the causes of conflicts, encourage the welfare of local populations, and promote long-term peace and stability. The cases highlight the significance of comprehending the relationship between environmental sustainability and peacekeeping and peacebuilding in conflict-affected areas.²⁸⁾

“Greening the Blue Helmets”²⁹⁾ is the product of continued collaboration between UNEP, the UN Department of Field Support (DFS), and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to improve natural resources and environmental considerations in UN peacekeeping activities. Peacekeeping operations have critical implications on natural resources and the environment; in turn, natural resources are frequently a crucial part of conflict resolution, livelihoods, and confidence-building at the local level.³⁰⁾

28) Tignino, Mara, and Tadesse Kebebew. “A Galaxy of Norms: UN Peace Operations and Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflict.” *International Review of the Red Cross*, August 25, 2023, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383123000322>.

29) U. N. Environment, “Greening the Blue Report 2023,” UNEP - UN Environment Programme, December 20, 2023, <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/greening-blue-report-2023>

30) Unfccc.int. “Conflict and Climate,” 2022. <https://unfccc.int/blog/conflict-and-climate>

V. Examples of Successful Integration of Environmental Considerations in MINUSCA, MONUSCO, and UNMISS

Central African Republic (CAR) (MINUSCA)

- Projects that promote reforestation and sustainable agriculture can help to alleviate deforestation and land degradation while also creating job opportunities. This can assist in lessening resource-driven conflicts in the Central African Republic.³¹⁾
- **Conflict Minerals Regulation:** The Central African Republic, like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, confronts conflict mineral difficulties, notably gold and diamonds. Environmental issues may be integrated through regulating mining practices, developing traceability systems, and encouraging responsible procurement.
- **Community-Based Resource Management:** Involving local communities in the sustainable management of natural resources such as forests and animals can improve environmental protection while also increasing trust in government agencies.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (MONUSCO)³²⁾

- **Conflict-Free Mining:** The DRC has a history of conflict over minerals, with resource exploitation driving the war. Integrating environmental considerations might include the creation of ethical mining practices and certification systems that ensure minerals are conflict-free and extracted in an environmentally sustainable manner.³³⁾
- **Virunga National Park Protection:** Conflicts have harmed the Virunga National Park, which is home to endangered species and essential ecosystems. Supporting park rangers, advocating anti-poaching measures, and including local populations in sustainable conservation and ecotourism activities are all examples of peacebuilding efforts.
- **Renewable Energy Initiatives:** Increasing access to clean and sustainable energy sources such as solar or hydroelectricity not only minimizes environmental effects but also improves living standards. Integrating renewable energy projects into peacebuilding initiatives can help to alleviate energy shortages while also fostering stability.

31) www.crisisgroup.org. "The CAR Crisis: Thinking beyond Traditional Peacekeeping," June 17, 2014. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/car-crisis-thinking-beyond-traditional-peacekeeping>.

32) United Nations. "MONUSCO." United Nations Peacekeeping, 2010. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/monusco>.

33) www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org. "Protecting the Environment in Armed Conflict." Accessed October 22, 2023. <https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/resources/updates/>

South Sudan (UNMISS)

• **Darfur Water Management and Conflict Resolution:**

It's critical to address disputes over the region's limited water resources. Programs that support sustainable water management and distribution, maybe mediated by international organizations or peacekeepers, can become a part of a successful integration..

- **Land Use and Resource Sharing³⁴⁾:** Conflict in Sudan has been significantly fueled by land rivalries over resources. Including environmental concerns might entail developing plans for fair land allocation and enhancing sustainable farming methods to ease conflict over scarce resources. Programs for post-conflict environmental rehabilitation can help restore ecosystems and open up prospects for agriculture and forestry. These programs address environmental harm while simultaneously providing viable economic alternatives, both of which are necessary for long-term peace.³⁵⁾

Here is a structured list of "Dos" for United Nations peacekeepers.³⁶⁾

Dos for United Nations Peacekeepers: Responsible Environmental Practices

- **Do No Harm:** Keep an eye that peacekeeping activities do not adversely affect the environment, surrounding communities, or local wildlife.
- **Respect Nature:** Show respect for the natural environment and local ecosystems.
- **Adhere to UN Environmental Policy:** Comply with the United Nations Environmental Policy (UNEP) and integrate environmental sustainability into all activities.

Active Resource Management³⁷⁾

- **Take proactive measures to conserve and use water and energy resources efficiently.**

protecting-the-environment-in-armed-conflict.

34) operationalsupport.un.org. "Environment | DEPARTMENT of OPERATIONAL SUPPORT," n.d. <https://operationalsupport.un.org/en/environment>.

35) RAND. "Environmental and Natural Resource Management." www.rand.org, n.d. <https://www.rand.org/topics/environmental-and-natural-resource-management.html>. United Nations. "Maintain International Peace and Security." United Nations, 2023. <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/maintain-international-peace-and-security#:~:text=Under%20Chapter%20VII%20of%20the>.

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- Reuse items to minimize waste generation.
 - Ensure proper disposal of waste.
 - Implement recycling programs for materials.

Promote Sustainable Practices such as engaging in tree plantation and other environmentally friendly measures. Explore options to recover materials or energy from waste and promote recycling within the mission area.

Remember the 5Rs, emphasize the importance of the 5Rs

- **Realize:** The first and most important step is realization. Realize the relevance and necessity of environmental education and then spread its awareness to others.
- **Reduce:** Reduce resource usage and production of waste.
- **Reuse:** When possible, utilize goods for multiple uses.
- **Recycle:** Create recycling initiatives for items such as paper, plastic, and metal.
- **Recover:** Explore interest in recovering valuable materials or energy from waste using different methods.

By adhering to these guidelines, United Nations peacekeepers can play a significant role in promoting responsible environmental practices and contributing to the overall sustainability of their missions.³⁸⁾

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VI. Conclusion

Climate and environmental awareness has become essential in UN peacekeeping operations due to the rising environmental issues. Protecting vulnerable civilians, managing resources, upholding operations sustainably, maintaining relationships with local communities, and adapting to the changing climate all rely on climate awareness. Therefore, empowering UN peacekeepers with ecological education can contribute to creating a more sustainable and peaceful world while aiding in conflict resolution.³⁹⁾

The UN should consider integrating more climate and environmental literacy into its operations and training. In addition, there is a need for systematic reporting of environmental degradation and natural resource violations to promote accountability, transparency, and sustainable development. It is crucial to respect the host state's environmental policies and report environmental violations in order to support sustainable peace and development.

Implementing environmental policies in peacekeeping missions can be challenging for peacekeepers. To overcome these obstacles and promote environmental sustainability, raising awareness about these issues through training and providing resources is essential. In addition, building partnerships with host states, international organizations, and NGOs can help address some of the resource and coordination challenges.⁴⁰⁾ Successful integration of environmental considerations into peacebuilding efforts in these regions requires a comprehensive approach involving international organizations, local communities, and governments, as well as collaboration among stakeholders to address complex and interconnected challenges of environmental sustainability and peace.

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