



# Corruption, Incompetence and Power: A Study on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Committed by UN peacekeepers and NGO Humanitarian Aid Workers Against Vulnerable Populations in Haiti

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## *Background*

UN peacekeepers and NGO humanitarian aid workers have been staples of the international humanitarian community for years. Humanitarian aid organizations were founded on the idea of the international community working together to help people in need worldwide. On paper, creating organizations to help foster peace is excellent, and both UN peacekeepers and NGO humanitarian aid workers have proved themselves helpful time and time again. However, in the mid-90s, the dark underbelly of these operations came to the international community's attention. Sex trafficking, rape, prostitution, and coercion are just a few of the types of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) UN peacekeepers and NGO humanitarian aid workers have committed against vulnerable populations for decades. Although much good has come out of humanitarian aid missions, many of the UN peacekeepers and NGO humanitarian aid workers on those missions have irreversibly damaged the lives of many people who were already suffering.

## *Research Questions and Hypotheses*

Research Questions:

- Why do UN peacekeepers and NGO humanitarian aid workers, people sent on missions to aid vulnerable populations, abuse their power to commit acts of sexual violence?
- Why are UN peacekeepers more likely to use more violence forms of sexual violence against vulnerable populations than NGO humanitarian aid workers?

Hypotheses:

- H1: The reason sexual violence is so prevalent among UN peacekeepers and NGO humanitarian aid workers is that these organizations do not have strong enough reporting procedures in place to prevent the abuse of power.
- H2: The difference in SEA training, meaning the quality of training received by UN peacekeepers and NGO humanitarian aid workers, allows the chance for UN peacekeepers to commit more violent sexual crimes than NGO humanitarian aid workers.

## *Methodology and Case Study*

This research uses a comparative case study to examine the reporting procedures of the NGO Oxfam and MINUSTAH as well as analyze if SEA training for MINUSTAH peacekeepers and Oxfam humanitarian aid workers leads them to commit different types of SEA. The method of difference best exemplifies the results to determine if there is a robust causal relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables. The chosen case for the study must include scenarios where both NGO humanitarian aid workers and UN peacekeepers committed acts of sexual exploitation and abuse to decipher what caused the difference in the levels of sexual exploitation and abuse. The research is qualitative and focuses on real-world concepts. The study's goals are to find if UN peacekeepers and NGO humanitarian aid workers had sufficient reporting procedures to prevent SEA and examine if different SEA trainings lead MINUSTAH and Oxfam to commit different types of SEA. The measure of the variables, reporting procedures, SEA training, and UN peacekeeping and NGO humanitarian aid worker SEA are ordinal as the type of SEA acts committed are compared to examine what differences appear.

## *Results*

Looking at UN peacekeepers' reporting procedures and training on MINUSTAH, some serious concerns about their ability to be uneducated about SEA and get away with their crimes are revealed. Many of the peacekeepers for the entirety of the mission had not been trained adequately in SEA or even done the mandatory trainings. The result of this is the obliviousness of the severity of their actions. Additionally, because many UN peacekeepers are military, the lack of sufficient SEA training means that in the instance of MINUSTAH, the UN failed to counteract the militarized masculinity often learned by people in the military. Combined with inferior reporting procedures that allowed peacekeepers to get away with the crimes unpunished, both the opportunity for SEA is created as well as more violent forms as there was no real training to combat militarized masculinity. The NGO Oxfam has a similar yet different story. Their gender awareness training, their version of SEA training, was extensive and detailed; however, there is no real way to know if this training was correctly implemented with the Oxfam employees who went to Haiti. Regarding Oxfam's reporting procedures, there appears to be no actual process or direct channel in which the organization receives and responds to misconduct allegations against their employees. Furthermore, when they did receive several allegations, they were able to cover up these accusations and allowed those found guilty to step down from their positions and be hired by other NGOs. This illustrates a complete lack of accountability and allows for SEA to continue and go unpunished. Furthermore, most of the SEA allegations against Oxfam employees in Haiti were either the use of prostitution or supplies in exchange for sexual favors. In looking at the reporting procedures and training, this study proves that these NGO humanitarian aid workers were aware that what they were doing was wrong because of the training they received but used the fact that they were exchanging something for sexual favors to excuse their behavior and not view their actions as SEA.

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