The relevance of reinforcing strategic stress management and welfare programs in UN peacekeeping operations

Based on an exploratory, cross-sectional survey of civilian field personnel in seven UN peacekeeping missions

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Abstract

Title – The relevance of reinforcing strategic stress management and welfare programs in UN peacekeeping operations

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Background and purpose - Stress is a growing concern in many workplaces today and much research has been done on occupational stress. Some of these studies are focusing on military, police and other job categories where employees are exposed to extreme danger. However, very little research has been done on non-uniformed civilians working in volatile contexts. This thesis investigates what stressors civilian field personnel are exposed to while on assignment in different UN peacekeeping missions and what UN peacekeeping operations are doing to manage or mitigate the effects of negative long-term stress among civilian peacekeepers.

Methodology – Identification of environmental and organizational stress factors in different UN peacekeeping operations have been done with the help of an exploratory, cross-sectional online survey carried out in seven UN peacekeeping missions. Based on identified stressors, this thesis investigates how stress management can be improved in UN peacekeeping operations.

Findings – Long-term occupational stress can be damaging for the individual employee as well as the entire organization, therefore, a more pro-active stress management approach is required. The survey results showed that there are many different environmental and organizational stressors in UN peacekeeping missions. Civilian field personnel’s access to gym facilities must be improved in many missions. A number of actions can be taken on the organizational level to raise awareness about welfare and stress management. The main recommendations are:

- More attention needs to be paid, at Headquarters and at mission level, in trying to reduce organizational stressors in missions;
- Secretary General’s recommendations from 2008 and 2009 should be implemented, i.e. ensure gym facilities for all staff members;
- Staff welfare should be a priority not an after-thought. Stress management strategies and welfare budgets, tailored to each mission, needs to be developed.

Keywords - United Nations peacekeeping operations, stress, stress factors, stress management, welfare programs.
Acknowledgements

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In the end, I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all survey participants. I am thanking all of you for making this thesis possible.

This thesis is dedicated to all UN peacekeepers, who work and live under sometimes very dangerous and stressful circumstances, contributing to making the world a better and safer place.

Hanna Snarberg

Meloneras, Spain, February 2011

The content in this thesis reflects the author’s personal views and does not represent those of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support or of the United Nations.
List of abbreviations

ACABQ  Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
COS    Chief of Staff
DDR    Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DFS    Department of Field Support
DPKO   Department of Peacekeeping Operations
HR     Human Rights
MBSR   Mindfulness-based stress reduction
PTSD   Post-traumatic stress disorder
PX     Post exchange (stores selling various products in UN Missions)
SCO    Stress Counsellor’s Office
SMLC   Senior Mission Leadership Course
SRSG   Special Representative of the Secretary General
UN     United Nations
UNAMI  United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq

List of UN peacekeeping missions taking part in the survey

MINURSO United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MINUSTAH United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MONUSCO United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
UNAMA United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNFICYP United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNMIK United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNMIN United Nations Mission in Nepal
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“Strengthened welfare programmes will add to the well-being of all personnel and enhance the morale and efficiency of peacekeepers. A minimum standard of welfare and recreation throughout missions will promote adherence to codes of conduct and discipline by alleviating adverse conditions. It will also help to reduce the level of staff turnover and foster a shared sense of purpose among the personnel serving the United Nations.”

U.N. Secretary General’s report of 13 January 2009 on the welfare and recreation needs of all categories of peacekeeping personnel and detailed implications (A/63/675)
1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation for the study
Approximately 99,000 uniformed personnel and over 22,000 national and international civilian peacekeepers (UN volunteers included) are working in 16¹ different United Nations peacekeeping operations worldwide today. Working in UN peacekeeping missions does involve an element of risk for many military peacekeepers but also for the civilian, non-military, staff members. Even though prior experience, education, and mental and physical training can prepare UN civilian staff members to carry out a tough and stressful job in a mission area, there is no absolute formula on how to deal with the abundance of stress factors that most likely will occur while on assignment.

In UN peacekeeping, as well as in the majority of contemporary work places, long-term stress can have an extremely negative impact on leadership as well as lower employee’s overall dedication to work. Stress can lead to poorer productivity, impact attendance levels negatively and lead to more frequent staff turnover. Moreover, besides all these negative effects, long-term stress can under some circumstances also cause problems when it comes to the overall image and reputation of the company or organization (Middleton, 2008:63). This suggests negative stress is to be taken seriously. From a managerial perspective, companies and organizations simply cannot afford to ignore the consequences of stress.

There are many strategies that aim at creating healthier and less stressful workplaces today. But even though organizations generally are aware and understand the negative effects of stress and how it may lead to unnecessary “personal, economic and social” costs, many managers, according to Kelloway & Day (2005:309), fail noticing, or, simply don’t know how to eliminate unhealthy signs of negative stress in their workplaces.

1.2 Research focus and aim of the thesis
UN peacekeeping offers a unique context with regards to different extreme stress factors. In more traditional workplaces, negative stress can stem from various sources such as too tight deadlines, office disagreements, family trouble, etc. In UN peacekeeping operations, civilian personnel must in addition to this, also deal with stressors from the fact that they are 24/7 working and living in a hardship post-conflict area. This can for example involve various security problems, risks of being involved in landmine accidents, risk of potential conflict outbreaks, or more everyday hassles like frequent water shortages, electricity cuts, lack of physical exercise opportunities, etc. In spite of this, very few studies have focused on how civilian mission staff is affected by these stressors. Many questions arise. Which stressors exist? How do employees manage to deal with accumulated stress? Can stress factors be identified and more effectively managed from an organizational standpoint?

¹ Missions that are directed and supported by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Figures and statistics available at: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/bnote.htm
The aim of the thesis is to:

- Gain more understanding and insight of different stressors that may lead to perceived stress among civilian personnel in UN peacekeeping missions.
- Look at UN mission staff access to exercise facilities and their frequency of exercise while on assignment.
- Investigate what is currently being done, at the UN Headquarters and at mission level, to reduce stressors and create a healthier workplace for field personnel.
- Suggest a matrix that can be used to identify, monitor, and evaluate potential stress factors in different missions.
- Suggest a number of straightforward, easy-to-implement recommendations on how to start improving workplace health in UN peacekeeping operations.

1.3 Research questions

Q1: What stressors exist among UN civilian peacekeepers?

Q2: What is currently being done, at the UN Headquarters and at the mission level, to reduce these stressors and create a healthy workplace for civilian field personnel?

Q3: How can it be done differently? Is there any room for improvement with regards to stress management and welfare programs in UN peacekeeping missions?

1.4 Definition of key terms

*Stress factors* and *stressors* are something that can be described as events or situations that may lead to stress. The two terms will be used alternately throughout the thesis.
1.5 Thesis structure

Chapter 1 - Provides an introduction to the subject and the underlying motivation for doing a research on stress among civilian UN peacekeepers.

Chapter 2 - Background chapter provides a brief organizational overview of UN peacekeeping operations and its welfare policy in the missions. It also discusses Secretary General’s reports on welfare and recreation from 2008 and 2009.

Chapter 3 – The literature review offers an overview of management theory and stress theory from a historical perspective. Recent research on occupational stress and stress management will also be reviewed. Studies on how to reduce stress and create a healthier workplace will be presented.

Chapter 4 - The methodology chapter explains the research methodology and the overall objective of this report. Survey methodology and questionnaire design are explained. Limitations of the research methods will also be discussed.

Chapter 5 – Summary of the survey results are presented in this chapter. It is also explained how stress management and health promotion currently works in UN peacekeeping. Budget and funding of welfare activities will be examined.

Chapter 6 - Conclusions and recommendations on how UN peacekeeping operations can improve stress management and health promotion in the organization.
2. Background - UN Peacekeeping Operations

This chapter provides an overview of the UN peacekeeping organization and serves as a brief introduction to how the issue of welfare and recreation started to become more of a priority in UN peacekeeping operations. It also provides a summary of two comprehensive reports of the Secretary General on welfare and recreation for non-contingent UN mission staff.

2.1 Organizational overview
Established in 1948, UN peacekeeping operations started to create conditions for international peace and security by “maintaining ceasefires and stabilizing situations on the ground.” However, with the end of the Cold War, international politics started to become less bipolarized and consequently the UN Security Council started to deploy UN peacekeeping operations based on very complex mandates. This has also led to an increased number of UN civilian personnel (hired individually from different countries, based on one year contracts) deployed in different field missions to enforce UN Security Council decisions.

In addition to civilian personnel, soldiers, military officers and police from 118 countries are currently monitoring and observing different peace processes by: “…promoting human security, confidence-building measures, power-sharing arrangements, electoral support, strengthening the rule of law, and economic and social development.” (Peacekeeping Overview Evolution and Effectiveness, 2008:5)

2.2 UN Peacekeeping reform
It is not viable discussing UN peacekeeping operations without first mentioning recommendations made in “The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations”, publicly referred to as the Brahimi Report. The document was presented by a panel in 2000, led by Lakhdar Brahimi, the former foreign minister of Algeria. It contained straightforward recommendations on how to improve future UN peacekeeping operations to better respond to the new complex political landscape that evolved after the Cold War. Today, it has become a well-known point of reference when talking about the organizational aspects of UN peacekeeping (Zittel, 2002).

According to Zittel (2002:502), one of the major criticisms against the report was that it was too focused on the organization of the UN Headquarters, and as a result not properly prioritizing required organizational changes on the ground.

Despite some criticism, the report has led to important improvements in how UN peacekeeping is being managed. Consequently, this has also led to the expansion and comprehensive reconstruction of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), by separating the Department of Field Support (DFS), to be headed by an Under Secretary General (United States Participation in the United Nations, 2007:63-64).

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Today, the Office of Operations in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (OO/DPKO) has the lead in managing all UN peacekeeping missions\(^5\) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) provides logistical assistance, i.e. administrative and personnel matters.\(^6\)

### 2.3 Welfare and recreation in UN Peacekeeping Operations

The importance of welfare and recreation for UN peacekeepers seems to have been seriously raised after reported misconduct and sexual exploitation among a number of serving UN peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2004. In the report of the Secretary General’s Special Advisor, Prince Zeid Raad Zeid al-Hussein, “A comprehensive strategy to eliminate future sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations” (A/59/710), from 24 March 2005, it is recommended that “United Nations establish fixed recreational sites inside a mission area or nearby to allow rest and recuperation of contingent members during their tour of duty.”

In February 2006, Under Secretary General for peacekeeping operations, Jean-Marie Guehenno, stated that prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

“ [...] cannot be achieved through training, information and public outreach alone. Welfare is another important part of the equation, as armed forces throughout the world know all too well. This is especially true when you deploy uniformed, as well as civilians, into quasi war-zones in the remotest parts of the world. Missions are addressing this issue as a high priority. Most are now creating constructive recreational outlets, and several have been established, from existing resources, multi-purpose sporting, socializing and dining facilities. These are the types of initiatives included in our welfare strategy and standard operating procedures on welfare promulgated and sent to all Heads of Mission last month.”\(^7\)

In 2007, UN member states raised the question of how to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers. Soon after, the General Assembly approved the “Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel”. In relation to this issue, member states also “... requested recommendations from the Secretary-General on welfare and recreation facilities for peacekeeping personnel...” (United States Participation in the United Nations, 2007:65)

The first comprehensive report on welfare and recreation for non-contingent personnel, Secretary General’s “Comprehensive review of the welfare and recreation needs of all categories of peacekeeping personnel”, (A/62/663), from 24 January 2008, identifies a number of welfare and recreation issues that need to be improved in UN peacekeeping missions.

\(^5\) Excluding special political missions. For missions represented in this thesis it includes United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) that are administered by the Department of Political Affairs.

\(^6\) Issues related to stress management fall outside DPKO and DFS and are dealt by the Staff Counsellor’s Office under the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) in the Department of Management.

The report explains that staff welfare committees, which are based on the voluntary commitment of UN personnel, generally have the main responsibility for welfare programs and recreational activities in the missions. The report also states that most missions, except for United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), don’t have any welfare officer posts and, therefore, these types of jobs usually become the responsibility of administrative staff. It is also explained that in some other missions, UNAMA for example, staff counselors, in addition to their traditional duties, also carry out welfare functions.

The report notes that: “Since members of staff welfare committees work as volunteers, and staff counsellors’ functions are of a limited and technical nature, there is absence in missions of a comprehensive, coherent and systematic approach to issues of welfare affecting all categories of peacekeeping personnel.” The report suggests that “there is clearly a need for minimum welfare and recreation facilities for various categories of non-contingent personnel at duty stations in peacekeeping missions.”

Three concrete actions are suggested:

(a) An indoor gymnasium installed with industrial-grade equipment;
(b) A multi-purpose recreation centre to be used as an indoor lounge, an Internet café and bar, provided with indoor games such as table tennis, darts, board games and refreshments, a television set with a VCR/DVD player and accessories;
(c) A library and a prayer/meditation room.

(Secretary General’s report A/62/663)

After this report, the Special Committee requested a more comprehensive follow-up. Secretary General’s report “Welfare and recreation needs of all categories of peacekeeping personnel and detailed implications”, (A/63/675), from 13 January 2009, presents concrete suggestions on how to create “minimum standards of welfare and recreation” in peacekeeping missions, including indicative costs of establishing a gym and a lounge/library. Estimated costs (USD) of minimum welfare and recreation packages for missions of different sizes are estimated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission Size</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small mission (four locations and 300 personnel)</td>
<td>$700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium mission (ten locations and 1,600 personnel)</td>
<td>$1662,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large mission (20 locations and 2,800 personnel)</td>
<td>$3,763,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Secretary General’s report A/63/675)

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8 Name of mission changed to United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in 2010
3. Literature review

Since this report is focusing on stress management and welfare programs in UN peacekeeping operations, this chapter will first provide a historical and theoretical framework of some well-known management theories and present important research on work stress.

3.1 Management theory

3.11 Historical perspective

In the beginning of the twentieth century, at the time of Henry Fayol and Frederick Taylor who pioneered respectively administrative and scientific management theories, the concern for employees and workers welfare was addressed essentially from the holistic perspective of the organization’s needs. Management theories focused on effective organization rather than socio-psychological studies of people’s behavior in organizations. In fact, Fayol did know very well that some of the problems workers or employees’ experienced came originally from the organization, not necessarily from the employees (Pietri, 1974).

In 1930-1950, management theories started shifting towards behavioral theories and scientists started studying the connection between workplace wellness and productivity. Via his famous Hawthorne studies, Elton Mayo concluded that employees were not only motivated by money. Instead, it was of much more importance how employees interacted with each other in the working group. According to Rieger (1995:58) much of Mayo’s conclusions and ideas became relevant again in the 90’s, when businesses and organizations started paying more attention to “…team building, systems thinking, shared decision making, and communication,” etc. But it is really later, during the 1960s and 70s that social sciences became more and more sophisticated regarding the way to engage with what people are really doing within the organization (Erving Goffman’s “The presentation of self in everyday life” and “Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity”, etc.). Other approaches in organizations and management started realizing the importance of workplace communication.

In the 40s, Abraham Maslow contributed to management theory by putting psychology at the center of attention, i.e. human behavior and motivation, instead of focusing on business performance. According to his “Hierarchy of Needs” (1943) humans have five sets of needs that he ranked in the following hierarchal order:

1. Physiological needs (food, water, etc.)
2. Safety needs
3. Social needs
4. Esteem and self-respect
5. Self-realization and accomplishments

(Dye et al. 2005)

In her article “Managing new millennium”, Patricia M. Buhler emphasizes how Maslow’s theory still is important for today’s managers when deciding how to motivate individual employees. By determining where in the hierarchy system employees are, managers can more
easily tailor individual needs. According to Buhler, it is also crucial that managers understand that all employees are not automatically at the same level in Maslow’s hierarchal system but have unique needs that also change over time (Buhler, 2003:21).

Frederick Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene theory is in the same line as Maslow’s behavior ideas. Herzberg concentrates on employees’ job satisfaction and his “job enrichment” theory makes a distinction between hygiene factors, i.e. conditions at the work place and motivation factors that are elements that contribute to professional growth, job satisfaction, etc. Examples of different hygiene and motivation factors at the work place are illustrated in Table. 3.11:1 (Genaidy et al. 2007:9).

**Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene theory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hygiene factors</th>
<th>Motivation factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relations</td>
<td>Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company policy</td>
<td>Work itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working conditions</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Advancement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 3.11:1 Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene theory, Source: Graham & Messner (1998:196)

Genaidy et al. (2007:9) writes that according to Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene theory, the optimal situation for employees’ can only occur as long as hygiene factors are not a cause for any discomfort and motivation factors contribute to a sense of confidence among employees.

According to Buhler (2003:21), one of the Motivation-Hygiene theory’s main contributions is the fact that there are no “quick fixes” and that managers must understand that hygiene factors are not enough to satisfy employees; it is instead the motivation factors such as responsibility and recognition that generate workplace satisfaction among personnel.

Another important contributor to behavioral management theory is Douglas McGregor. In his book, “The human side of enterprise,” from 1960, he presents Theory X and Theory Y. In Theory X, McGregor has categorized employers who have a general negative attitude towards employees as they are seen as unproductive with little to offer the organization. In Theory Y, on the other hand, managers appreciate and see employees as they are having “self-direction” and “self-control”, capable of contributing with important ideas and in-put to the organization (Kopelman et al. 2008:255).

While looking at UN peacekeeping operations one can see how stress management can benefit from existing organization theory and management. The volatile context and the job’s character, makes it often impossible for the organization to guarantee all of Herzberg’s “Hygiene factors” or Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs”. Maslow’s physiological needs and safety needs (step one and two), are for example very difficult to guarantee due to frequent electricity cuts, security risks, etc. that often afflict peacekeeping environments. But what is interesting is that they propose a road map for dealing with occupational stress.
3.2 Stress theory

3.21 Stress theory

From the same behavioral discipline as Elton Mayo, Abraham Maslow, Frederick Herzberg and McGregor developed their management theories; physiologist Hans Selyes (1907-1982), became one of the first and most important contributors to the area of stress theory. In 1935, he identified stress as a “physiological reaction that was a unitary response of all organisms to all environmental agents.” (Viner, 1999:394).

Various definitions of stress have been discussed amongst scientists over the years but still today there is no absolute agreement on how to define stress. However, according to Ivancevich et al, one commonly used definition is as follows: “An environmental stimulus, or stressor, often described as a force applied to the individual; an individual’s psychological or physical response to such forces; or, the interaction between these two.” (Ivancevich et al, 1990:252).

There are several theoretical approaches on how to conceptualize stress but as explained in The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work Report, Research on work-related stress and Mogens Agervold’s book Arbete och stress, stress theory can usually be divided into three categories – stimulus, response, and process theory (Cox et al, 2000:32) (Agervold, 2001:61).

**Stimulus theory**

In this so called engineering approach, stress is considered being an external event, a “stressor” that happens to the individual (Agervold, 2001:61) (Cox et al, 2000:32). According to this theory, stress can stem from three different sources: 1. Catastrophes like earthquakes or war. 2. Serious life events such as family tragedies, divorce, deaths, etc. 3. Chronic conditions like living or working in a constant tough environment with stressors such as noise, pollution, security risks, etc. (Emeke, 2006:49).

**Response theory**

In this category, stress is primarily seen as a physiological reaction, a “physiological response to a threatening or damaging environment” (Cox et al, 2000:32), a so-called “fight or flight” reaction (Agervold, 2001:61).

**Process theory**

In the psychological approach, stress is seen as a “dynamic interaction between the person and their work environment” (Cox et al, 2000:35). This theory is divided into two categories:

- **Interactional theory**
  Concentrates on an individuals “interaction with their work environment.”

- **Transactional theory**
  Focus on the psychological aspects (Cox et al, 2000:35).
Majority of contemporary stress theories fit into process theory (Cox et al, 2000:35), like Robert A. Karasek’s and Tores Theorell’s Demand-Control-Support theory, for example. This interaction theory, in essence, claims that workplaces where demand is high and control and support is low, automatically are in the risk zones of having employees that are very stressed (Devereux et al, 2009:562-564).

Another interaction theory is the Person-Environment Fit theory where stress is believed to increase if the employee and the organizational environment don’t match (Devereux et al, 2009:562).

Lazarus and Folkman have made an important contribution to transactional stress theory with their Cognitive Behavioral theory. In this theory “…nothing by itself is considered a stressor.” Stress is instead something that stems from the dynamics between the environment and the individual, which according to Devereux et al (2009:565) could explain why people have individual stress responses - an incident cannot by itself be stressful since every situation is individually judged by the person experiencing it.
3.3 Occupational stress

In this chapter occupational stress will be further investigated by reviewing different potential sources of stress in the workplace together with an evaluation of some important models of work stress.

3.31 Sources of stress

According to Thompson (2010), stress factors can be divided into four groups. In Table 3.31:1 he provides concrete examples of common stressors in each one of these categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.31:1 Sources of stress by categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home maintenance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Thompson, (2010:130)*

3.32 Stress at the work place

In addition, the work category in table 3.31:1 can further be divided into physical and psychosocial stress factors. The physical stressors are easy to identify and are often related to how the work place is ergonomically designed, involving factors such as temperature, machines, lights and so forth (Agervold, 2001:32). Psychosocial factors involve how the organization is being managed, employees influence on their own work situation, and so forth (Agervold, 2001:33-34).

In UN peacekeeping, in addition to physical and psychosocial stressors at the workplace, external environmental stressors are very important to recognize as crucial stress factors since there is often insufficient infrastructure, frequent electricity cuts, etc. in many UN missions. Individual stressors concerning home and health are also present.

Potential sources of stress for civilian UN peacekeepers have been outlined in Figure 3.32:1.
However, it is important to note that stressors are not having the same impact on all individuals. To refer back to the earlier mentioned Person-Environment Fit theory, Agervold states that it is the fit between the organization and the individual that is important and if the organizational demand and the employers expectations don’t match, then there is a bigger risk for stress (Agervold, 2001:38).

As we have seen, there are many potential sources of stress in the workplace but one psychosocial stressor is worth some extra attention - organizational change. Organizational change is also a big concern for peacekeeping, which is build upon continually changing political mandates, short-term contracts, downsizing and frequent organizational reconstruction.
According to Dool (2010), organizational change is very common and almost unavoidable in today’s fast changing environment but unfortunately it can often lead to a high level of stress. As examples of stressors related to change, Dool mentions for example “technological advancement, increased globalization, nomadic workforce, economic shifts, increased competition…”, etc. It all contributes to a general feeling of living and working in an environment that is pretty unstable and unpredictable, and it can many times lead to a general feeling of “…insecurity, uncertainty, and threat” (Dool, 2010:254-255). Unfortunately, many poorly designed change management initiatives can involuntarily contribute to an increased stress level in the organization according to Dool (2010:254) and instead he suggests a new change management framework, the so-called “C5” - communications, collaboration, confidence, cohesion, and climate (Dool, 2010:259). The model is based on practices from the U.S. military and it intends to make employees more resistant to organizational change by increasing their possibilities to adapt to change, since change is unavoidable in today’s society anyway (Dool, 2010:253).

3.33 Consequences of stress
Scientists generally agree that long-term stress impact workplaces and employees very negatively. There is an abundance of articles and studies describing how to recognize the consequences of negative stress in the organization. For example, in his book “The Stress Effect”, Thompson mentions higher rate of absenteeism, lower productivity, accidents, additional medical insurance claims which leads to higher costs for organizations. He also points out that stress is a contributing factor to several serious health conditions and even suicide (Thompson, 2010:112).

Another serious consequence of stress is “burnout” which is a term used when individuals cannot deal with stress in a constructive way anymore. In Arbete och stress, Mogens Agervold describes that a person who is burnt out usually withdraws and stops being engaged in job, family and friends (Agervold, 2001:69). According to Agervold, these types of symptoms are common in very social work places that involve a lot of contacts with clients, patients, etc. Especially jobs where there is an underlying will to help, but where employees’ aspirations for different reasons cannot be realized, are in high-risk zones for burnout according to Agervold. He further explains that employees might be disappointed and start blaming themselves for not living up to their own high set expectations and have an underlying feeling of disappointment when things did not go the way they were hoping (Agervold, 2001:70-71). The reasons for burnout are important to mention, since the specific causes mentioned above can be directly linked to many UN civilian peacekeepers work situations.
3.34 Model of work stress
To better understand how stress factors impact individual staff members and the organization, Palmer et al. has developed a model of work stress. A slightly modified version is presented in Figure 3.34:1.

Potential stressors
- Poor life-work balance
- Work communication
- Security
- Lack of exercise
- Traffic
- Boredom
- Work load
- Family situation

Symptoms of stress
- **Individual**
  - Various health symptoms
  - Increased alcohol/nicotine consumption
  - Negative emotions
- **Organization**
  - Increased absence
  - Reduces staff performance
  - Reduced staff morale

Negative outcomes
- Depression
- Burnout
- Costs
- Reduced profit
- More workplace accidents
- Costs

Figure 3.34:1 Model of work stress. Modified model based on Model of Work Stress ©, developed by Palmer & Cooper 2003, Source: Palmer et al. (2004)

It is important to note that the model provided here only illustrates a fraction of all potential stressors, symptoms and outcomes. Nevertheless, it gives a good overview on how stressors impact individuals and the entire organization.

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9 Stressors are selected to better correspond to potential stress factors in various UN Peacekeeping missions.
3.35 Stress and its impact on leadership
Stress does not only affect employees but it also concerns the effectiveness of leadership in the organization. In Ledarskap under stress, Larsson listed a number of negative symptoms long-term stress can have on leaderships’ performance:

- no capability of seeing the whole picture;
- tends to think about mistakes that happened in the past instead of thinking ahead;
- tries to do too many things at the same time;
- has wrong priorities and has a tendency to focus on things that are non-important;
- forgets to delegate;
- passively receives information provided instead of pro-actively investigating other alternatives;
- gives instructions that are too complex or non-clear to subordinates.

*Source: Larsson, (2010:12)*

Especially in dangerous and risky work situations, like in case of accidents, crises and war, where people’s lives and health are in danger, you find numerous potential stress factors. In these contexts many leaders deal with crises and crisis management as part of their daily duties. Larsson states that there is much literature and research on leadership in extremely stressful and volatile situations. He mentions for example American studies that commonly focus on natural disasters or accidents. However, the vast majority of this literature focuses on psychological reactions among staff and victims – not so much on the organizational aspect or leadership, Larsson (2010:9-10) states. In another study, “Advancing a research agenda for leadership in dangerous contexts”, Hannah *et al.* also state that there is need for much more research on how effective leadership works in dangerous situations (Hannah *et al.* 2010).

3.36 Positive and negative stress
Discussing occupational stress, it is also important to make a clear distinction between positive and negative stress. Stress doesn’t always have to be considered as something unconstructive that immediately must be eliminated. According to Pihulyk (2001), stress can be considered positive when it gives people energy to perform at their best - mentally and physically. Too little stress is not good since it has a tendency to generate a feeling of “aimlessness” and “stagnation” (Pihulyk, 2001:24). In accordance with the *process theory* (see p. 17), which most stress researchers refer to these days, Pihulyk states that people do not automatically react equally to the same stressor. One person might get energized and inspired in a certain situation while another person feels paralyzed and hindered.
3.4 Stress management

3.41 Stress management
Stress management focuses on decreasing physical and psychosocial stress factors in the work environment and there are many different techniques to do that. Agervold mentions a few central thoughts for consideration. For example, do employees have influence over their work situation? If not, something should perhaps be changed on an organizational level. Another thing that is very important is to look at the overall psychosocial situation in the organization. Because even though people react differently to stress (again, in accordance to the process theory) there are certainly some stressors that affect everyone in the organization (Agervold, 2001:100-101).

In “Managing workplace stress”, authors Stephen Williams and Lesley Cooper (2002) emphasize the importance for managers to get objective data when trying to investigate stress related issues in the organization. According to the authors, it is crucial to discuss stress with staff; however, this has to be complemented with more objective data collection in the form of confidential stress surveys. Their suggestion to effective stress management is based on the following four steps: 1. collect evidence; 2. understand the issues; 3. interpret the information; 4. take appropriate action (Williams & Cooper, 2002).

3.42 Stress management vs. stress reduction
There are mainly two ways to deal with stress in the work place (Agervold, 2001:68). The first, stress management, is the organization’s methods and policies to try to develop working conditions so that the psychosocial working environment improves (Agervold, 2001: 100.) It aims at decreasing various external stressors, i.e. factors that cause stress. The other strategy, stress reduction, concentrates, on the contrary, on an individual’s capability to manage stress (Agervold, 2001:68). It provides different actions or techniques that can help lowering staff members’ perception of stress. While stress management provides a more long-term solution to lower the stress level in organizations, stress reduction (like exercise for example) performed on a regular basis, can, according to Fried (2008:61), serve as a form of stress management.

![Stress Management and Stress Reduction](image-url)

**Figure 3.42:1 Stress Management and Stress Reduction.**
*Source:* Model based on Agervold (2001:68)
Agervold (2001) describes that many recent studies on occupational stress have a tendency to focus on stress reduction and how individual staff members can reduce the negative impact of stress. Focus is therefore on how the individual’s personal health and way of living should be improved, instead of prioritizing stress management on an organizational level. Today’s stress management techniques are mostly concentrated on how companies can strengthen the worker’s own ability to resist stress by encouraging a healthy lifestyle, etc. (Agervold, 2001:99). Agervold mentions also that this type of stress reduction is of high relevance but that we at the same time should not forget that reducing work stress should primarily be considered on an organizational level (Agervold, 2001:100).

3.43 Wellness programs

In recent years many companies have started trying to improve their employees’ physical and mental health by planning and implementing wellness, or health promotion programs (Sherman, 1990:5). According to Cooper et al. (2009:4) wellness programs can have a positive effect on occupational stress, but only as long as they are seen as an integral part of the organizational structure.

Employees with good physical, mental, and emotional health are an important asset for the organization in terms of increased performance and productivity, less employee absenteeism, lower costs, higher employee morale and improved company image (Sherman, 1990:6-10). Wellness programs that are properly planned, implemented and evaluated, can therefore lead to a true win-win situation according to Grathwohl (2009:9-10). These types of programs are very easy to put into place and can be designed to target individual needs without costing too much (Grathwohl, 2009:11). If they are considered as an integral part of a “wider human resources and operational strategy”, it can become a very powerful tool in the organization’s efforts in trying to reduce negative stress (Cooper et al, 2009:4).

Unfortunately, according to Arnold (2009), many wellness programs involve “hard-copy handouts, instructor-led classes, and coaching...” which makes it more difficult and more expensive than it actually has to be. He therefore suggests that online wellness programs, that cost much less, can provide exactly the same information to all employees, in any location, 24/7 (Arnold, 2009:63).

There are many different types of wellness programs available. They can, for example, be less formal in the sense that the company only encourages staff to have a healthy lifestyle and exercise on a regular basis. Other companies might choose to promote health ideas through newsletters or by paying membership to health clubs, which of course is a much more costly alternative (Sherman, 1990:26).

The first step is to identify the company’s needs as well as individual employees’ specific requirements. It is also important to set up long-term goals and establish objectives with recommendations in line with the organizations capabilities and resources. In the initial stage it is a good idea to involve employees in the planning process. One way to go is to send out a survey to find out employees specific concerns and ideas (Sherman, 1990:16 -25).

There are many different wellness programs available: nutrition education, stress management, fitness and exercise, smoking cessation, alcohol and drug prevention, just to
mention a few (Sherman, 1990:40-63). Sherman gives examples of different health promotion ideas that don’t have to cost a fortune. The organization can for example offer a resource library where employees have access to cookbooks, health magazines, self-help books and brochures. Another idea is to offer nutritious food in the cafeteria, publish wellness newsletters or offer different activity clubs such as jogging, cooking classes, dancing, etc. (Sherman, 1990:68-69).

Implementation of wellness programs is a good start but in order to obtain good results it is crucial to evaluate the wellness program regularly. Via feedback from the employees it is easy to see if the organization lived up to the set objectives or if something should be changed? (Sherman, 1990:80).

In his article “Positive Stress”, Donoghue (2003:55) argues that it is possible for organizations to turn negative stress among its employees into something positive instead. He sees stress as something that is “self-induced by those who falsely perceive that they do not have the resources to cope” and suggests ten concrete steps for organizations to take control over the situation (Donoghue, 2003:55). His ten-step action plan to manage stress is:

1. “Take measures to change attitudes and perceptions
2. Implement training programs (yoga, tai chi)
3. Encourage stressed staff and managers to take time out
4. Learn the advantages of deep breathing and exercise
5. Promote the idea of letting staff keep a stress diary
6. Introduce fitness awareness programmes
7. Have seminars on how to build a positive self-image
8. Organize time management programmes
9. Adopt a strategy for staff to manage stress when energy is highest
10. Discuss performance, expectations and options on how to reduce stress”

Source: Adapted from Donoghue (2003)

3.44 Mindfulness as a stress management tool
Mindfulness is an eastern concept, quite recently incorporated into western psychology (Hede, 2009) now also a relatively newly adopted stress management tool. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) helps individuals to start focusing on their own thoughts and paying more attention to what happens in his/her own mind whenever there is a sense of being under pressure. Mindfulness “…leads to a partial decoupling between mental events and voluntary or involuntary actions, including physiological reactions.” In this way, a more balanced mind state can be attained (Walach et al. 2007:189).

3.45 Research on stress in peacekeeping settings
In the chapter “UN Peacekeepers and civilian field personnel” in “Trauma Interventions in war and peace”, written by Friedman et al. (2003) the authors are focusing on civilians working for different UN organizations and how UN addresses different needs of civilian field personnel before, during, and after deployment. The authors state that there has been little research done on civilian peacekeepers as compared to military, even though civilian
peacekeepers are also exposed to many different stressors. The authors’ list several factors that they believe make life difficult and on the whole very stressful for civilian field staff members. Some of them are reproduced in Table 3.45:1.

**Potential stressors for civilian field personnel**

- Personal vulnerability, attacks, kidnapping
- Encountering the acute consequences of war
- Exposure to emotional suffering
- Witnessing ongoing trauma or violence
- Ambiguous rules of engagement
- Hopelessness or guilt due to inability to change the situation
- Hostility of host country
- Detachment from familiar/safe environment
- Boredom, inactivity and uncertainty

Table 3.45:1 Potential stressors for civilian field personnel. *Source: Friedman et al. (2003)*

The authors’ main recommendations are:

- Pre- and post-deployment monitoring of staff and adjustment of the Organization’s policy to better suit conditions on the ground;
- Provide tailored education and training;
- Provide psychological support during deployments.

*(Friedman et al., 2003)*

There is a large amount of research covering stress in international peacekeeping but apart from this book most researchers are focusing on the military and especially in relation to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Three examples are listed below:

“Posttraumatic stress disorder and associated risk factors in Canadian peacekeeping veterans with health-related disabilities” *(Richardson et al. 2007)*.


“A model for understanding stress and daily experiences among soldiers in peacekeeping operations” *(Johansson et al. 1998)*, just to mention a few.
3.46 Literature review summary
The literature review shows that there is much research on how stress can affect employees, leadership, and entire organizations in a very negative way. Stress factors can come from many different sources, for example, home, work, health, and environment. In the workplace there are many stress factors, both physical and psychosocial.

In addition to studies on occupational stress there is also a lot of literature on stress management. Recently, stress management has a tendency to move towards stress reduction which implies employees own responsibility in trying to reduce stress. This goes in line with the widely accepted process theory where stress is considered being a “dynamic interaction between the person and their work environment.” There are also many studies on how organizations can implement wellness programs to reduce employees’ perception of stress.

Research on stress in peacekeeping settings that was presented at the end of this chapter is just a small selection out of a large number of literature and articles on this topic. Many of these studies are primarily focusing on PTSD in different military contingents and among veteran peacekeepers. It is important research especially since a majority of peacekeepers are serving within the military in dangerous situations.

However, the literature review demonstrates that there is lack of research on how stress affects civilian peacekeepers. The literature review also shows that almost all research done on stress among civilian peacekeepers was done from a psychological perspective, and not so much from a managerial, organizational, or leadership perspective. There is need for much more research on how stress and stressors can be eliminated or reduced among civilians working in peacekeeping. Identifying different stressors and developing possible strategies to prevent stress on an organizational and on an individual level, is therefore the chosen topic of this thesis.
4. Methodology

4.1 Research methodology and objective
There is very little research on what types of stressors exist among UN civilian peacekeepers. The first step is therefore to identify some of the environmental and organizational stress factors that exist in different UN peacekeeping operations. This will be done with the help of an online survey. As soon as survey results are presented, the next step is to investigate measures being taken on an organizational level to see if, and in that case, how wellness activities and stress management can be more effective. This will be done with the qualitative research method.

4.2 Primary and secondary data
Both secondary and primary data is being used in this study. Primary data involves information that is collected from the original source, in this case the survey. Secondary data refers to already collected information such as literature and various publications (Collis & Hussey, 2009:23).

4.3 Survey methodology and objective
An exploratory, cross-sectional online survey is being carried out in seven UN peacekeeping missions to gather quantitative data on what type of stress factors exist in different UN peacekeeping missions. Exploratory research is suitable when there is little knowledge in the area and there is a need of gaining more insight into the topic of concern (Collis & Hussey, 2009:5). Cross-sectional studies are conducted when data is collected from various contexts at a particular point in time (Collis & Hussey, 2009:77). At this stage, it is not deemed as necessary to use inferential statistics to identify relationships between variables since no hypotheses will be tested. The survey aims at identifying different stressors and generating a matrix and frequency bar charts for convenient comparison and analysis of different stressors. The survey is a quick and effective way to obtain a general picture of the organization’s strengths and weaknesses regarding stress factors as well as to investigate mission staff access and usage of gym facilities.

This information could also have been retrieved by conducting qualitative interviews but since it was important to obtain a general, wide-ranging picture of different stressors, an online survey was deemed as more suitable. The information derived from the survey results is thereafter being analyzed together with findings from qualitative research involving literature review, articles, UN publications, UN welfare budgets, etc. This will contribute to a better understanding of occupational stress, stress management and wellness programs in different UN peacekeeping missions.

A mixed-methodology (qualitative and quantitative approach) will therefore be used and the survey results will help answering Q1: What stressors exist among UN civilian peacekeepers? The succeeding qualitative research of secondary and primary data will help answering Q2: What is currently being done, at the UN Headquarters and at the mission level, to reduce these stressors and create a healthy workplace for civilian field personnel? and Q3: How can it be done differently? Is there any room for improvement with regards to stress management and wellness programs in UN peacekeeping missions?
4.4 Data collection
Online surveys are inexpensive, quick and convenient when there is a need to reach a specific targeted group located in different parts of the world (Van Selm, 2006:437). There are essentially two ways of conducting an online survey, either via e-mail or through a web-based survey (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006:435). There are several advantages with online surveys and Van Selm et al. (2006:438-439) mentions for example that the non-presence of interviewers usually leads to more accurate responses. Authors also mention the convenience for respondents who easily can receive and fill in the survey anonymously.

4.5 Questionnaire design
There are a number of rules to follow when constructing a survey and keywords when designing the questionnaire are “simplicity, cultural independence, completeness, relevance and neutrality…”. Therefore, during the process, extra attention was paid to these recommendations. It was also important to keep the questionnaire as short and concise as possible without excluding too many important questions (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006: 441).

Apart from demographic questions in the beginning, the survey had eight questions related to environmental stressors and eight questions related to organizational stressors. The survey also had three questions related to access and attendance to exercise facilities while on assignment (see Appendix A.).

The survey was divided into three parts:

**Part one:** Demographic profile.

**Part two:** Training/exercise questions. Yes and no answers.

**Part three:** To measure possible organizational and environmental stressors there are 16 questions based on possible stressors that previously have been identified by United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) staff counselling unit (Managing the stress of peacekeeping operations, 2006:11,15-16). In total, eight organizational questions and eight environmental questions. Answer alternatives were scored on a 5-point Likert scale where

1 = never
2 = rarely
3 = sometimes
4 = often
5 = always

(Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006: 451)

The questionnaire was distributed by email that contained a link to the online survey, designed in Survvs.com. The introductory email also gave a brief explanation of the project, the aim of the survey and that respondents answers were being kept strictly confidential.
4.6 Mode rate
Once the surveys were carried out, mode rate, which is a measure of central tendency, was calculated (Collis & Hussey, 2009:242). Based on the result, a comprehensive matrix was created (see table 5.14:1 on p.37), which displays the most frequent answer to each stressor in each mission. The matrix is designed to facilitate visual comparison of stressors between missions as well as to display the overall data trend in the same mission. In this matrix, Likert scale ratings were not displayed since it gave a better overview when providing the actual answer to the questions, i.e. never, rarely, sometimes, often or always.

4.7 Mean rate
To give a more comprehensive picture of the survey results, mean rate was also calculated. This was done by dividing the sum of observations by the total number of observations. It aims at providing an average rate for each stressor.

The formula is:

\[ \text{Mean} = \frac{\sum x}{N} \]

\( \sum \) = the total sum
\( x \) = each observation
\( n \) = the total number of observations

(Collis & Hussey, 2009:240)

The result of the mean rate calculation is displayed in a multiple line graph that shows the average rating of stressors in each mission. Line graphs are usually being used when the data is collected at different times but in this case, a line graph provided the best overview (see survey result based on mean rate on p. 40).

4.8 Limitations of research methodology
One limitation when conducting a survey in many different UN peacekeeping missions was the difficulty of designing a survey questionnaire that was 100 percent relevant to all missions. All questions regarding potential organizational and environmental stressors had to be quite generic.

Another limitation of the questionnaire was that it had to be adjusted to fit both national and international staff members who have very different conditions regarding culture, language and living situation. Working in a foreign country can, for example, be more stressful than working in your country of origin. Another difference is also the family situation. Majority of national staff members usually have the ability to live together with their families. International staff in many missions do not have this possibility since they are instead separated from their family while on assignment. To live in a country where you might not understand the language can also be an additional stress factor for many international peacekeepers. Vice versa, there are other stress factors national personnel experience that internationals might not experience to the same degree.
All these diverse stress factors could not be taken into account in this exploratory survey. In this particular case, it was more important to create a survey that could be used in all UN peacekeeping missions and apply to all staff, regardless if they are working as international or national staff.

Another major limitation was that preparing and conducting a survey in so many missions were exceptionally time-consuming. Finding the right contact persons who could assist in sending out the survey in different missions was very difficult. Some missions were exceptionally accommodating while others were difficult or even impossible to contact.\(^\text{10}\)

There are of course many potential stressors in peacekeeping missions but the survey solely included 16 potential stressors that can exist among UN civilian peacekeepers. Making the questionnaire short was a strategic choice since the chances of receiving more responses was then deemed as much bigger.

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\(^{10}\) For example, UNAMA reacted positively immediately and senior management supported the survey. Few missions required approval from UN Headquarters. Other missions chose not to participate in the survey for various reasons.
4.9 Research design summary

**Q 1: Which environmental and organizational stressors exist in different UN peacekeeping missions?**

Very little research exists on stress factors in the civilian peacekeeping workplace. With help of an exploratory, cross-sectional survey the aim is to identify environmental and organizational stress factors in different UN peacekeeping operations.

**Primary data**

Survey

---

**Q2 and Q3: Based on identified stressors, what is currently being done to reduce stress and how can a more effective stress management strategy be implemented?**

With help of the qualitative research method the purpose is to investigate stress management in UN peacekeeping operations and see how wellness activities and health promotion can be more effective.

**Primary, secondary data**

Survey, literature review, articles, UN publications, budgets, etc.

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**Research findings and analysis**

With help of the mixed-methodology, both primary and secondary data will be analyzed and contribute to a comprehensive analysis of stress factors and stress management and welfare policy in UN peacekeeping operations. The analysis will provide a foundation for a number of straightforward, easy-to-implement recommendations, i.e. an action plan on how to reduce work stress in UN peacekeeping operations.

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**Conclusions and recommendations**

Figure 4.9:1: Summary of research methodology
5. Research findings and analysis

5.1 Survey results

5.11 Respondent rate of total mission staff
The online survey was sent out to heads of mission support (administration) in all UN peacekeeping missions in October/November 2010. The survey was open for participation between 11 October and 4 November. Altogether seven missions had a sufficient number of respondents to participate in the analysis – United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Table 5.11:1 Respondent rate of total mission staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Total staff</th>
<th>Total respondents</th>
<th>Respondent rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNAMA</td>
<td>1,929</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINURSO</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONUSCO</td>
<td>4,327</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFICYP</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIN</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUSTAH</td>
<td>1,918</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIK</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ n = 9192^* \]  \[ n = 527 \]

* National staff, international staff and UN volunteers included.


5.12 Total respondents rate
According to Survs.com, the application that was used when sending out the online survey, the questionnaire was viewed by 1198 respondents. In total 527 questionnaires were completely filled and were used in the result, thus making the final respondents rate approximately 44%.

5.13 Demographics

Table 5.13:1 Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>women</th>
<th>men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNAMA</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINURSO</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONUSCO</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFICYP</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIN</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUSTAH</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIK</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In all missions, majority of survey participants were men. UNFICYP (Cyprus) and UNMIK (Kosovo) had most balanced gender records.

**Table 5.13:2 Profession**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional category</th>
<th>UNAMA</th>
<th>MINURSO</th>
<th>MONUSCO</th>
<th>UNFICYP</th>
<th>UNMIN</th>
<th>MINUSTAH</th>
<th>UNMIK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political and Civil Affairs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IT/Supply/Transport Press Office</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Advisor’s Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine Action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Profession has been divided into two categories. The second category contains professions that are operating where there are more external stressors involved: health, security, police, DDR, military advisors and mine action. Looking at the percentage of participants in each category we can easily see that there are a clear majority of survey participants that belong to the first category.

**5.14 Stress factors based on mode rate**

A summary of the survey results has been compiled in frequency charts based on percentages in Appendixes B.1 and B.2 (starting on p. 64). In this chapter, table 5.14:1 (p.37) shows a summary of the survey results in each mission based on mode rate, i.e. the most frequent answer (never, rarely, sometimes, often or always) on each stressor in every mission. It provides a good overview and a general picture of what type of stressors that could be of concern in each mission.

Looking at the eight environmental stressors (colored green in table 5.14:1, p.37), two stressors got “always” as the most frequent answer (colored in orange). It can be interpreted as “remote locations” is a big potential stressor in MINURSO (Western Sahara) and “dangerous conditions” is of major concern in UNAMA (Afghanistan).

On question seven, “do you experience hazardous political climate?” the most frequent answer in UNAMA (Afghanistan) was “sometimes”. Here it is important to note that this does not show the complete picture. Looking at the frequency charts in appendix B.1 (Chart: XII) most respondents, 30%, answered indeed “sometimes,” however, what is not visible when demonstrating mode rate is that as much as 27% of respondents answered “always” and 25% answered “often”.

35
In MINUSTAH (Haiti), “difficult climate” got the mode rate “often”. Since the survey was carried out not long after the devastating earthquake in January 2010 this response was quite expected.

“Frequent water and/or electricity cuts” is of bigger concern in MONUSCO (Congo) and MINUSTAH (Haiti) compared to the other missions.

Looking at the organizational stressors (the blue field in table 5.14:1, p.37), “lack of mission planning” got mode rate “often” in MINUSTAH (Haiti). Again, this is not very surprising considering how hard the country and the UN mission itself was affected by the natural disaster.

“Low recognition of staff accomplishments” was mostly rated “often” in both MINUSTAH (Haiti) and UNMIK (Kosovo).

“Lack of stress management” was rated “often” most frequently by survey participants in both UNFICYP (Cyprus) and MINUSTAH (Haiti), and that was perhaps a bit surprising. When it comes to Cyprus, the survey question (Do you experience lack of stress management?) is of a character that it doesn’t give respondents much of a choice. There might not be a lot of stress management carried out in the mission but it doesn’t necessary mean that there is a need for it. On the other hand, there might actually be a need for stress management even though the mission is located in an area were there is low level of tensions as compared to many other UN peacekeeping missions. There can be many different factors leading to occupational stress in the mission and this might be something that should be looked into.

In MINUSTAH (Haiti) the result is also a bit surprising since different stress surveys and stress management courses have quite recently been carried out in the mission. However, the result might indicate that the overall stressful situation after the earthquake requires that stress management, crises management and welfare activities should be much more prioritized in the mission at this point.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you experience…</th>
<th>UNAMA</th>
<th>MINURSO</th>
<th>MONUSCO</th>
<th>UNFICYP</th>
<th>UNMIN</th>
<th>MINUSTAH</th>
<th>UNMIK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. difficult climate?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. remote locations?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. shortage of shelter?</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. frequent water and/or electricity cuts?</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. general lack of resources?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. dangerous conditions?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. hazardous political climate?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. negative culture/ethnic/gender attitudes?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. lack of mission planning?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. unclear mission?</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. conflicting policies?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. interagency conflicts?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. lack of office equipment?</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. low recognition of staff accomplishments?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. lack of stress management?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. lack of staff?</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.14:1 Survey results based on mode rate
5.15 Stress factors based on mean rate

The survey results displayed according to mode rate in a matrix like the one in table 5.14:1 (p.37) gives a good overview of which stressors that are of most concern in each mission. However, mode rate cannot provide a satisfactory answer by itself. Calculation of mean rate can therefore complement the picture further.

Chart I: “Survey results based on mean rate” (p.40) allows for a quick overview of the seven surveyed missions. It shows in a clear way, how each potential stressor was rated on average in each mission.

Answer alternatives have been scored on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often and 5 = always. Thereafter, mean rate was calculated according to the following formula:

\[ \text{Mean} = \frac{\sum x}{N} \]

\( \sum \) = the total sum
\( x \) = each observation
\( n \) = the total number of observations

As an example of how the calculation of mean rate can give a more holistic picture we can take a look at the first survey question: “do you experience difficult climate?” This stressor was rated very high in MINUSTAH (“often”) according to table 5.14:1 (p.37). But if we instead look at the mean rate, this stressor was on average actually rated even higher in MINURSO (Western Sahara) compared to the other missions (see Chart I, p.40).

Looking at some other results, non-uniformed staff in UNAMA (Afghanistan) rated on average “dangerous conditions” and “hazardous political climate” as being more predominant stressors compared to the other missions.

The environmental stressors (the first eight questions), civilian staff in UNMIK (Kosovo), UNMIN (Nepal) and UNFICYP (Cyprus), do not seem to see as much of a stress factor compared to the other missions. This result is quite expected and can be explained by the fact that all these three Missions have adequate access to required goods and services and have proper transportation and infrastructure available. However, it is interesting to note that one environmental stressor, “water and electricity cuts”, staff in UNAMA (Afghanistan) rated as less of a concern compared to UNMIN and UNMIK. This can possibly be explained by the fact that UNAMA provides accommodation in UN compounds to its civilian staff, while staff in UNMIK (Kosovo) and UNMIN (Nepal) have to find and rent their own accommodation on the local market were water and electricity cuts can be more common than in a UN compound.

In general, in UNAMA (Afghanistan), MINUSTAH (Haiti), MONUSCO (Congo) and MINURSO (Western Sahara) civilian staff rates environmental stressors much higher than UNMIK (Kosovo), UNMIN (Nepal) and UNFICYP (Cyprus).
Looking at the organizational stressors (stress factors that are directly linked to management, stressors 9-16, Chart I, p.40), they show for example that civilian staff in UNMIN (Nepal) rate all these stressors (except “unclear mission”) as less of a problem compared to all the other surveyed missions. UNFICYP (Cyprus), on the other hand, seems to have least organizational problems regarding “unclear mission”.

Another very interesting finding is that UNAMA (Afghanistan), a mission with many environmental stressors, organizational stressors such as “interagency conflicts”, “lack of office equipment”, “low recognition of staff accomplishments”, “lack of stress management” and “lack of staff” are ranked as less of a stress factor, or at the same level as UNFICYP (Cyprus), a mission with much less environmental stressors.

Looking at the three last stressors (q. 14-16, Chart I, p.40), “low recognition of staff accomplishments”, “lack of stress management”, and “lack of staff”, all missions are rating theses stressors very high, except for UNMIN (Nepal).

Even though much more research is required, looking at the survey results of all eight organizational stressors (q. 9-16), it looks like UNMIN (Nepal) is managing all these stressors (except “unclear mission”) more effectively than the other missions.
Stress factors based on mean rate

Chart I: Survey results based on mean rate
5.16 Access to gym facilities
On the question if mission staff had access to gym facilities in the mission area, MINUSTAH (Haiti) was the only mission where more respondents said ‘no’ than ‘yes’. However, the number of staff who answered ‘no’ is still very high across all missions.

![Chart II: Access to gym in missions](chart2)

5.17 Exercise on a regular basis
On the question if mission staff exercises on a regular basis, i.e. 1 hour 3 times per week, the majority responded ‘no’ in five missions. Only in UNAMA (Afghanistan), slightly more respondents answered ‘yes’ and in MONUSCO (Congo) the result was 50/50.

![Chart III: Exercise in missions](chart3)
5.18 Rate of survey participants who do not walk or exercise regularly

Chart IV: Rate of survey participants who do not walk or exercise on a regular basis

5.19 Gender difference
In all seven missions where the survey was conducted, more women than men reported that they don’t exercise or walk on a regular basis. In MINURSO (Western Sahara) and in UNFICYP (Cyprus) the gender difference was biggest. The smallest discrepancy was found in MONUSCO (Congo) and UNMIN (Nepal).

Chart V: Gender difference among respondents who neither walk nor exercise regularly
5.2 Stress management in UN peacekeeping

After presenting the survey results in chapter 5.1 we have a clearer picture of potential stress factors in the different missions. This chapter describes what is currently being done by the organization regarding stress management and stress reduction among civilian peacekeepers.

5.21 Stress management programs
At the UN Headquarters in New York, the Stress Counsellor’s Office (SCO) offers a number of stress management programs and wellness courses specialized for all UN staff, managers and supervisors. The SCO also provide special workshops tailored to specific departments or needs. Every mission is different, but usually these stress management courses are carried out in the mission under the supervision of the mission staff/stress counsellor. The reason for this is that a qualified professional should be present in case any serious psychological issues arise for individuals during the session. In an email conversation on 9 November 2010, Chief of Staff Counselling in New York, outlined that stress management training programs were recently re-developed and they are now are leaning more towards Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Mindfulness.

On the UN SCO website the stress management courses are presented together with the overall purpose for stress management training: “[...] stress in the workplace is a significant economic and health care issue [...] Preparing organizations, at all levels of involvement, to proactively address these critical issues results in the development and maintenance of a psychologically healthy workplace.” The stress management program is divided into five modules and is reproduced hereunder:

**Module I: Stress in the work place**
- Unique characteristics of the UN workplace
- Definitions of stress, strain, distress, and related terms
- Research data on the links between stress, psychosocial well-being, and physical health outcomes/status

**Module II: Individual self-care practices**
- The impact of stress on psychosocial health: cognitive, emotional, physical, social/relational and spiritual aspects
- Using a personal stress profile as a guide to stress management

**Module III: Organizational stress management practices**
- Additional data regarding the effects of stress in the work place
- Sources of stress in the work place as a psychosocial hazard
- Models of work place stress

**Module IV: The stress of humanitarian work**
- Unique aspects of humanitarian work, including risks
Module V: The effects of traumatic stress
- Definitions
- Risk factors
- Resiliency factors
- Prevention strategies and practices
- Guidelines for when to seek professional assistance

The anticipated outcomes are described as follows:
- Increased knowledge of the effects of stress in the work place
- Increases commitment of a percentage of staff members to develop and practice regular self-care strategies
- Increased commitment of a percentage of directors, managers and supervisors to commit to the principles of a psychologically healthy workplace
- Improved self-care practices for a percentage of staff members preparing for mission assignments

The SCO does not usually provide training materials electronically since in their opinion, stress management training should be face-to-face and under supervision by a staff counsellor in each mission.

5.22 UN Senior mission leadership course and UN Training Centre in Brindisi, Italy
The UN conduct two senior mission leadership courses (SMLC) a year and regular training activities in its Training Centre located at the UN Logistics Base (UNLB) in Brindisi, Italy.

In a conversation on 18 November 2010, MINURSO Chief of Staff (COS), who attended the SMLC in June 2010, confirmed that stress management was never discussed.

According to the UNLB website, they offer a stress management seminar on defining stress and related symptoms and different stress management techniques, available for what is described as a “varied audience”.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MISSION</th>
<th>STAFF STRENGTH</th>
<th>TOTAL BUDGET</th>
<th>WELFARE &amp; RECREATION BUDGET (2010/11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| UNAMA     | International civilians: 345  
Local civilians: 1,526  
UN Volunteers: 58  
Total staff strength: **1,929** | USD 168,000,000 (as of 2009-2010)  
*Source: http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1748* | USD 170,000  
*Source: Office of the SRSG.* |
| MINURSO   | International civilians: 98  
Local civilians: 161  
UN Volunteers: 20  
Total staff strength: **279** | USD 60,038,500 (gross)  
*Source: MINURSO COS.* | USD 67,000  
*Source: MINURSO COS.* |
| MONUSCO   | International civilians: 954  
Local civilians: 2,776  
UN Volunteers: 597  
Total staff strength: **4,327** | USD 1,369,000,000 (gross)  
*Source: According to the budget office of the DFS.* | No welfare budget allocated according to the budget office of the DFS. |
| UNFICYP   | International civilians: 39  
Local civilians: 112  
UN Volunteers: 0  
Total staff strength: **151** | USD 58,156,300 (gross)  
*Source: UNFICYP Public Information Office.* | USD 78,000  
*Source: According to the budget office of the DFS.* |
| UNMIN     | International civilians: 41  
Local civilians: 123  
UN Volunteers: 19  
Total staff strength: **183** | UNMIN is a DPA mission that works on a two-year budget cycle. The anticipated budget for 2010-2011 is USD 20,000,000 (Source: UNMIN Public Information Office)  
*Source: According to the budget office of the DFS.* | No welfare budget allocated  
*Source: According to the budget office of the DFS.* |
| MINUSTAH  | International civilians: 470  
Local civilians: 1,222  
UN Volunteers: 226  
Total staff strength: **1,918** | USD 380,000,000 (gross)  
*Source: UNFICYP Public Information Office.* | No welfare budget allocated according to the budget office of the DFS (2009/2010 USD 30,200).  
*Source: UNFICYP Public Information Office.* |
| UNMIK     | International civilians: 138  
Local civilians: 240  
UN Volunteers: 27  
Total staff strength: **405** | USD 47,874,400 (gross)  
*Source: UNMIK Public Information Office.* | No welfare budget allocated according to the budget office of the DFS.  
*Source: UNMIK Public Information Office.* |
Table 5.23:1 (p.45) shows the total budget (year 07/10 – 06/11) and allocated welfare budget for all UN peacekeeping missions that participated in the survey. In an e-mail from the DFS budget office on 7 December 2010, it was confirmed that no funds are allocated for welfare in MONUSCO and UNMIK. In UNMIN, no budget for staff welfare exists, instead money for staff welfare activities come from voluntary donations, i.e. when staff pay for their drinks at parties for example. There is also some small revenue for staff welfare coming from a café at the UN compound.

According to the budget office of the DFS, welfare funding in UN peacekeeping missions are usually provided for missions with difficult living conditions. However, Cyprus had it for many years and continues to request. Some missions never request welfare funding. The basis for calculation of a welfare budget is $8 per international civilian staff member per month. In UNMIS (UN mission in Sudan) and UNAMID (UN mission in Darfur), for example, the staff welfare is over $300,000 according to the budget office in DFS.

Table 5.23:2 demonstrates calculations of how much is being budgeted for welfare per international staff member per month, in the surveyed missions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>% of total budget</th>
<th>USD per international staff member per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNAMA</td>
<td>Welfare budget</td>
<td>$170,000</td>
<td>0,1%</td>
<td>$41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINURSO</td>
<td>Welfare budget</td>
<td>$ 67,000</td>
<td>0,1%</td>
<td>$57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONUSCO</td>
<td>Welfare budget</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFICYP</td>
<td>Welfare budget</td>
<td>$78,000*</td>
<td>0,1%</td>
<td>$167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIN</td>
<td>Welfare budget</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUSTAH</td>
<td>Welfare budget</td>
<td>$30,200**</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>$5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIK</td>
<td>Welfare budget</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X = No welfare budget exists during this fiscal year

* = It is worth mentioning that UNFICYP’s welfare budget was 78,000 (2009/100) and 81,700 (2008/09)

The result is striking. There is a big difference in how much money each mission allocates on welfare and recreational activities. The differences become even more evident when calculating “USD per international staff member per month”. One question arises, why is the mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP) having so much more money allocated to welfare activities compared to the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)?

5.24 Funding of welfare activities

As explained in the literature review, fitness is an important stress reduction activity and is a central part of many welfare programs. In UN peacekeeping missions, gym equipment is purchased on an ad hoc basis through the budget approved by the General Assembly.

In a conversation on 18 November, 2010 with MINURSO Chief of Staff (COS) it was explained that wellness activities (not defined and can involve everything from gym equipment to BBQs) are arranged differently from mission to mission. In MONUSCO, for example, the contractor for the PX services (stores in UN missions selling mainly food, alcohol and cigarettes to international staff, military and police) has also established wellness centres for mission staff.

In smaller missions (MINURSO for example), different wellness activities have instead been funded from a percentage of the revenue received by the PX, owned by a local contractor and the UN cafeteria. In 2010-2011 budget year, MINURSO for the first time was allocated funds for the specific purchase of gym equipment.

All UN member states have not yet been convinced of the importance to fund pro-active stress management in the form of wellness activities. The problem lies in the fact that all member states have to be convinced that welfare programs and exercise are crucial for UN staff’s well-being and productivity in the work place. If a mission wants to request funding for wellness activities or gym equipment, the mission has to submit the request in its yearly budget proposal. The budget is discussed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). In person or by video link, the mission leadership has to defend the budget in front of a panel that consists of 16 members appointed by the General Assembly in their individual capacity. Thereafter, it goes to the 5th Committee of the General Assembly for approval.

Leadership in every mission has to convince the UN Secretariat. Then they can try to convince the General Assembly to institutionalise the need for gym equipment and other wellness activities.

If a mission gets a budget for welfare activities depends therefore on how forceful and convincing the mission senior leadership is in defending their proposal in the budget.
6. Conclusions and recommendations

Stress is a growing concern in many workplaces today but very little research has been done on stress among non-uniformed civilians working for UN peacekeeping. The aim of this thesis was to investigate what type of stressors civilian field personnel are exposed to while on assignment in different UN peacekeeping missions and what UN peacekeeping operations is doing to manage or mitigate the effects of negative long-term stress among civilian peacekeepers.

In UN peacekeeping, the importance of welfare and recreation for peacekeepers seems to have been seriously raised first after reported misconduct and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) among a number of serving UN peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in early 2000.

The first comprehensive report on welfare and recreation for civilian personnel was issued as late as 24 January 2008 (five years after the first credible reports of SEA). It identified a number of welfare and recreation issues that needed to be improved in UN peacekeeping missions. Three concrete actions were suggested for missions: Gym; a multi-purpose recreation centre and library; and a prayer/meditation room. The next report related to welfare was issued one year later, and presented more concrete suggestions.

There is an obvious need for improving welfare and recreation in UN peacekeeping but it takes time. Focus on how the organization on a managerial level can better deal with occupational stress seems to have been neglected to some degree.

During this research, no previous report that investigated specific stress factors and compared them between different UN peacekeeping missions was found. Therefore, to answer Q1: What stressors exist among UN civilian peacekeepers?, an online survey was distributed and sixteen potential stress factors were rated by civilian field personnel in seven UN peacekeeping missions (UNAMA, MINURSO, MONUSCO, UNFICYP, UNMIN, MINUSTAH and UNMIK).

The survey results showed that both organizational and environmental stressors are frequent in many UN peacekeeping missions. Some missions like UNMIN, UNMIK, and UNFICYP have less environmental stressors than other missions. But organizational stressors are of more or less concern for all missions surveyed. (However, UNMIN was a positive exception). For mission management, alleviating the level of environmental stress is mission impossible since it relates to the overall political and security situation on the ground. On the other hand, organizational stressors can and should be dealt with by senior staff since they relate strictly to the business climate in the mission and can be promptly resolved through pro-active leadership.

The statistics showed that there are a wide range of stressors in the missions. This might indicate the difficulty to reduce stress via regular stress management programs focusing on how individuals can deal better with stress, mindfulness, etc. If there seems to be a “low recognition of staff accomplishments” (UNMIK for example) this type of stressor can only
be reduced at an organizational/managerial level. Another example is “lack of mission planning” (MINUSTAH). It is understandable that this stressor is so high rated after the earthquake in January 2010, but it is essential to try to reduce sources of stress by the organization’s leadership/management as promptly as possible.

The survey results demonstrated that stressors of all kind exist at different levels in the surveyed missions and that it is justified to see what is being done on an organizational level with regards to stress management and welfare activities in the missions.

To answer **Q2: What is currently being done, at the UN Headquarters and at the mission level, to reduce these stressors and create a healthy workplace for civilian field personnel?**, civilian field personnel’s access to gym facilities was investigated. The result varied a great deal between missions.

Gym facilities were available to more than 50 percent of civilian field personnel in six out of seven missions (MINUSTAH being the only exception where 61% answered that they didn’t have any access to a gym). The number of staff who answered ‘no’ is still very high across all missions and the goal must be full access to gym facilities for all staff members.

On the question if mission staff exercises on a regular basis, i.e. 1 hour 3 times per week, the result was quite alarming. In five missions, the majority responded ‘no’. Only in UNAMA, slightly more respondents answered ‘yes’ and in MONUSCO the result was 50/50.

When investigating the rate of civilian staff who neither walk nor exercise on a regular basis while on assignment, the numbers were also quite alarming across the board. However, UNMIN was a positive exception with only 23% answering that they don’t exercise or walk regularly. In MINUSTAH this figure was 61% and in MINURSO the figure was 48%. The mission leadership should look at some innovative ways to encourage exercising and welfare activities in the missions. (N.B: For the record, some missions are located in very dangerous areas where the threat of being kidnapped and/or killed is so high, that walking or running outside the UN compound is strictly forbidden by UN Security. In these missions it is even more important to develop other exercise options for staff.)

It also became clear that more men than women exercise on a regular basis. That holds true for all missions. This is something that mission management should be concerned with and one solution could for example be to establish women targeted exercise programs. Gyms can be more accessible for women. Perhaps have certain times when the gym is open only for women. More group training, yoga, etc. might also be an option.

In addition, PXs should focus more on welfare products and training equipment for both men and women.

Looking at mission budgets and money allocated to wellness activities it also became clear that there is no thought through policy across the board on this matter. Why, for example, does UNFICYP have such a high welfare budget compared to other missions bearing in mind
that access to welfare facilities in Cyprus, a well-known international resort, is very easy outside mission headquarters?

Access to gym facilities is crucial for UN civilian peacekeepers and must be improved. The goal must be that every staff member has such access. Staff members who work in remote areas could perhaps be offered transportation to the gym in the mission HQ.

Another remarkable finding was that the senior mission leadership course does not seem to incorporate stress management in their training. Leadership must know how to reduce negative stress in the missions and learn how to do that pro-actively. The senior mission leadership course could be the perfect forum for this. As one can see from the literature review, stress is also affecting leadership and they themselves have to know strategies on how to lower stress levels to make correct decisions, etc.

Brindisi offers stress management courses, however, the training center is very remotely located for most missions and getting there is costly. Moreover, the stress management courses available for “various staff” only showed up on the UNLB website at the end of 2010. (Before it was only offered to UNLB staff). Perhaps similar stress management courses could be offered online.

**Q3: Is there any room for improvement with regards to stress management and wellness programs in UN peacekeeping missions?** will here be answered in the form of a number of concrete, straightforward, easy-to-implement recommendations.

1. Since UN peacekeeping contexts in its nature are quite volatile and stressful it should be a priority making stress management a more central and integral part of the organization. Mission leadership should work on stress management pro-actively.

2. A special stress management program could be individually tailored for each UN peacekeeping mission and target every mission’s unique organizational and environmental stress factors. The matrix presented in table 5.14:1 and the multiple line graph in Chart I could be used. Matrixes can be designed for individual missions as well as for all peacekeeping missions to compare results and progress achieved over time.

3. Yearly stress surveys could be distributed by the Staff Counsellor’s Office in all UN peacekeeping missions to measure personnel’s perception of stress in order to more precisely tailor stress management to better suit each mission with their specific needs of reducing different stressors.

4. A new stress management strategy (developed either by UN HQ for all missions or tailored by mission management to each individual mission) could for example involve planning, implementing and evaluating a welfare program and developing different health promotion ideas.

5. Stress management could be given much more focus in UN peacekeeping, since employees are exposed to very difficult stressors on a daily basis. One way to more
effectively target negative long-term stress would be not only to remove welfare activities from the domains of the UN Staff Counselling Office and deploy welfare officers instead, as suggested by “Secretary Generals’ report on the comprehensive review of the welfare and recreation needs of all categories of peacekeeping personnel” (A/62/663) 24 January 2008, but also to make stress management a more integral part of the organization at a higher level (for example, part of the Office of the Under Secretary General who heads DFS). One of the main arguments to do so is that many employees are not aware or probably don’t feel comfortable consulting the counselling unit, unless in times of personal crises, office conflicts, or critical situations in the mission area.

6. More focus could be given to various welfare activities in the missions. Yoga classes, dancing programs, football tournaments, etc. exist in many UN peacekeeping missions but mainly thanks to voluntarily initiatives. As an example, management could on a regular basis raise the importance of exercise and different fitness activities to encourage more staff to take part. Management could encourage different forms of exercise through various channels – newsletters, organize regular health seminars and health promotion theme days.

7. As the survey results showed, there is a need for better access for all mission staff to gym facilities in a majority of the missions.

8. Staff members who work and live in the field, far away from the UN mission headquarters were the gym usually is situated, could get some special arrangements. Perhaps a small gym in their area of assignment or a regular transport service to the nearest exercise facility.

9. Mission PXs (a vast majority are storing and selling huge supplies of cigarettes and alcohol) could also have a department focusing more on welfare and health. DVDs with yoga, Pilates, training programs, etc. CDs with relaxation exercises could be offered. Training equipment that is easy to use at home – jump ropes, weights, Swiss-balls, etc. could also be provided. In some mission PXs there is also need to focus more on women’s training clothes and accessories.

10. Meeting places for UN staff could be offered after working hours inside the UN compound area. Mission cafeterias could be utilized for other activities, such as different board games, cooking classes, etc. in the evenings and on weekends.

11. Communication and information have a stress relieving effect on employees. Internal communication could be more prioritized by UN peacekeeping press offices. A weekly newsletter informing mission staff on important local news related to the UN mission and current political landscape would be an inexpensive and easy way to keep all mission staff up-to-date on the latest developments. Most missions send out daily media reports but they are usually targeting the political office and senior management - not the general mission staff.

12. As an addition to infrequent town hall meetings, where communication with mission staff is very limited, it would be a good idea to appoint an Internal Communication Manager in the office of the SRSG. The Internal Communications Manager’s main purpose would be to
regularly inform mission staff about the latest developments in the mission and about upcoming organizational changes (like, for example, downsizing). The Internal Communication Manager could also provide continuous information about political developments, non-confidential military activities in the area, the latest security situation, upcoming social activities and health information. Having important internal communication updates being coordinated through one Internal Communication Manager instead of several offices and departments could be more efficient. This would especially be relevant in complex multi-dimensional missions and could lead to a better and more straightforward communication channel between UN Headquarters in New York, the mission leadership and employees. More direct feedback from staff would also be possible.

13. It is recommended that senior mission leadership on a more regular basis inform mission staff about the mission goals and about recent achievements the mission has made within its mandate. This could for example be done via the Internal Communication Manager, e-mail circulars, newsletters, or at separate town-hall meetings. To communicate the positive effects of UN peacekeeping, on a mission and overall organizational level, it is important to keep UN mission staff motivated and convinced that their efforts are leading to positive changes on a local as well as a global level.

14. More focus and pro-active action needs to be done to try eliminating or at least heavily reducing the negative gender/ethnic/culture attitudes in missions. As the survey showed, this is a potential negative stress factor. Surveys targeting this specific concern could be distributed among mission staff and a suitable action plan could be tailored accordingly.

15. The yearly senior mission leadership course could add a session on stress management so managers in UN peacekeeping missions are better prepared and understand different sources of stress. In this way they could be better equipped to eliminate potential stress factors in their respective departments.

16. All missions should be provided with at least one staff counselor. This is a requirement that cannot be forfeited because of budgetary or any other concerns. Larger missions should all have designated welfare officers, as proposed in the Secretary General’s report on welfare and recreation from 2008.
6.1 Recommendations for further research

Stress can have a very negative impact on entire organizations, leadership and employees. Much of the existing research on occupational stress in peacekeeping environments has previously focused on the military and military veterans. Not many studies are aimed at civilian peacekeepers working in volatile contexts. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to try to identify some of the more prominent stressors in seven UN peacekeeping missions and see what can be done from a managerial perspective in trying to reduce some of the stress among civilian personnel.

The UN peacekeeping system is a complex organizational structure where it is costly and time consuming to do major organizational changes. In the end, based on the survey results and the literature review, the overall goal was to come up with a number of straightforward, easy-to-implement recommendations on how to improve stress management and reduce the perception of stress in the day-to-day life of civilian personnel in UN peacekeeping missions.

However, much more studies on this topic are required, particularly with a focus on the gender perspective, keeping in mind that mission environments can perhaps be more of a stress factor for women. This is important to continue to investigate, especially since the survey results showed that women don’t exercise as much as men while on assignment in UN peacekeeping missions.

Stressors investigated in this thesis are just a sample of possible stressors in peacekeeping missions. More specific stress factors can be identified to better suite individual missions, departments and offices.
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UN Peacekeeping statistics

Monthly Summary of Contributors of Military and Police Personnel
Appendix A

Survey design

*I am conducting a survey to analyze the perception of stress among UN civilian peacekeepers. The survey should take no more than 5-10 minutes to complete. Your responses are anonymous so information is kept strictly confidential regarding the actual person answering it.*

*Please choose only one alternative per question.*

### Section I: Demographics

1. Gender:  
   - Male  
   - Female

2. Your current mission
   - MINUSTAH
   - MINURSO
   - UNMIL
   - UNOCI
   - MINURCAT
   - MONUSCO
   - UNAMID
   - UNMIK
   - UNMIS
   - UNFICYP
   - UNTSO
   - UNIFIL
   - UNDOF
   - UNAMA
   - UNMOGIP
   - UNMIT

3. Cross your current professional area
   - Administrative/Civil Affairs
   - Political/Press
   - Health
   - IT/Supply/Transport
   - Security
   - Police
   - Mine Action

4. Cross your current professional involvement
   - P - level staff
   - Local staff
   - Volunteer
   - FS level staff
   - Short-term contract
   - D - level or above
(5) Do you have managerial responsibilities?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

(6) Number of years in your current job position?
0-3 years  ☐
4-7 years  ☐
8-11 years ☐
12 or more years ☐

(7) Total number of years working for UN peacekeeping missions?
0-3 years  ☐
4-7 years  ☐
8-11 years ☐
12 or more years ☐

**Section II: Training and physical condition (exercise)**

(1) Do you have access to a gym or any other exercises facilities during your current mission?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

(2) Do you walk regularly, i.e. at least 30 minutes per day?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

(3) Do you exercise on a regular basis, i.e at least 1 hour, 3 times per week?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

**Section III: Stress factors**

Do you experience...

(1) difficult climate?
Never ☐
Rarely ☐
Sometimes ☐
Often ☐
Always ☐
(2) remote locations?
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Often
Always

(3) shortage of shelter?
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Often
Always

(4) insufficient water resources or/and electricity cuts?
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Often
Always

(5) lack of resources in general?
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Often
Always

(6) dangerous conditions (potential conflict outbreak, mine accidents)?
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Often
Always

(7) hazardous political climate?
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Often
Always
(8) negative cultural/ethnic/gender attitudes?

Never  □
Rarely □
Sometimes □
Often □
Always □

(9) lack of mission planning/failure to build on previous experience?

Never  □
Rarely □
Sometimes □
Often □
Always □

(10) unclear mission?

Never  □
Rarely □
Sometimes □
Often □
Always □

(11) conflicting policies and/or instructions?

Never  □
Rarely □
Sometimes □
Often □
Always □

(12) interagency conflicts and/or competition?

Never  □
Rarely □
Sometimes □
Often □
Always □

(13) inadequate provision of office equipment?

Never  □
Rarely □
Sometimes □
Often □
Always □
(14) low recognition of staff accomplishments?
Never ☐
Rarely ☐
Sometimes ☐
Often ☐
Always ☐

(15) low priority of stress management?
Never ☐
Rarely ☐
Sometimes ☐
Often ☐
Always ☐

(16) lack of staff?
Never ☐
Rarely ☐
Sometimes ☐
Often ☐
Always ☐
Appendix B.1

Survey results - environmental stressors

1. Do you experience a difficult climate?

Chart VI: Difficult climate

2. Do you experience remote locations?

Chart VII: Remote locations
3. Do you experience shortage of shelter?

![Chart VIII: Shortage of shelter](chart_viii)

4. Do you experience water and/or electricity cuts?

![Chart IX: Water and/or electricity cuts](chart_ix)
5. Do you experience lack of resources in general?

Chart X: Lack of resources

6. Do you experience dangerous conditions?

Chart XI: Dangerous conditions
7. Do you experience hazardous political climate?

Chart XII: Hazardous political climate

8. Do you experience negative culture/ethnic/gender attitudes?

Chart XIII: Negative culture/ethnic/gender attitudes
Appendix B.2

Survey results - organizational stressors

9. Do you experience lack of mission planning?

![Chart XIV: Lack of mission planning](chart)

10. Do you perceive your mission as unclear?

![Chart XV: Unclear mission](chart)

11. Do you experience conflicting policies?

Chart XVI: Conflicting policies

12. Do you experience interagency conflicts?

Chart XVII: Interagency conflicts
13. Do you experience inadequate provision of office equipment?

Chart XVIII: Office equipment

14. Do you experience low recognition of staff accomplishments?

Chart XIX: Staff accomplishments
15. Do you experience low priority of stress management?

![Chart XX: Staff management](image)

16. Do you experience lack of staff?

![Chart XXI: Lack of staff](image)