



## IPI MEETING BRIEF

### Training for Senior Leadership in Missions

Scenario-based learning for senior leadership teams in UN field missions can greatly improve strategic thinking, decision making, and crisis management in increasingly uncertain operational environments. IPI's Scenario-Based Learning for Senior Leadership project therefore aims to develop eight training scenarios to be used by senior leadership in peace operations. To integrate these scenarios into existing training being undertaken by the United Nations, the International Peace Institute (IPI) and the UN Integrated Training Service (ITS) within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support hosted a closed-door roundtable on July 11, 2018, as part of a continued collaboration between IPI and ITS.

The meeting began with presentations on the existing training architecture and continued gaps, as well as the framing and rationale for in-mission senior leadership retreats. The presentations featured findings from a paper looking at gaps in training for senior leadership which will be co-authored by Laura Powers and Kevin S. Kennedy. Participants then discussed what a senior leadership retreat could look like and what needs it should address. Key takeaways included:

- **Teambuilding is an important priority for senior leaders.** A need that was stressed was for leaders to build coherent and effective teams with strong communication and trust. This is particularly important for bridging divides between civilian and uniformed personnel, as they often have different understandings of leadership, as well as different and sometimes conflicting ways of operating. Integrated training with case studies such as the ITS-led Senior Mission Leaders (SML) course and Senior Leadership Programme (SLP) can address these gaps.
- **Training is most relevant and needed in anticipation of transition or change.** Senior leadership teams are busy and cannot always find time for training, unless it has direct relevance to their work. By focusing training on an impending change such as a drawdown, change in mandate, or elections, it can be directly relevant to the work of the senior leadership team and can support members of the team to work through processes and standardize their approaches.
- **Leadership within the UN is different than in other contexts,** and these differences should be stressed in training. Unlike national settings, UN missions are multinational and multidisciplinary, uphold specific norms and values, and operate in difficult environments. Understanding the unique challenges mission settings bring is important in aligning individual leadership skills with the needs of a mission, its leadership team, and the larger framework of UN leadership. Some participants highlighted that leaders in other settings, such as the UN country teams, could benefit from similar trainings.
- **Topics covered in trainings should be tailored to the needs and requirements of each mission.** One-size-fits-all trainings are unlikely to address the unique challenges of a mission and will make it difficult to get buy-in from the senior leadership team. Prior to trainings, the mission leadership team should identify its needs. While this self-assessment should be combined with an

assessment of institutional needs by UN headquarters, it should be the primary factor shaping training support. Though each mission is unique, participants noted that topics such as protection of civilians, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, human rights, and security were areas of concern across missions.

- **In-mission training for senior leadership needs support for UN headquarters.** Participants noted that many similar initiatives were unsuccessful due to a resistance to the idea of training for senior leaders, timing, logistics, and resources. Stronger implementation of training policies from headquarters, aligned with adequate resources and funding, would be able to address some of the challenges faced in-mission.