

## The Questions

### Who is responsible?

Does the Global North have a responsibility to the Global South?

Should billionaires and corporations have a role in development?

What role should the receiving country play?

### Who is accountable?

Should NGOs be accountable for their mistakes? What legal precedence is there?

What is the role of national governments in advancing development in the country?

How should repayments and compensations be made?

### How can we make good decisions in complex scenarios?

How can we evaluate risk and potential harm?

Should there be ethical review of NGO projects?

How do we decide which issue receives funding?

How sustainable are aid programs?

# Issues in Contemporary Ethics: Global Development

## At a Glance

Actors involved within Global Development are diverse, as are the issues they seek to address. The context also varies significantly, from responding to humanitarian emergencies (e.g. responding to natural disasters) to advancing development objectives (e.g. strengthening education and healthcare systems). This Brief analyzes ethics and global development, by exploring the example of misconduct and atrocities committed by those whose mandates are to protect.



Un Peacekeepers in the DRC (Akena, 2012)

## Case Study: Peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The goal of the United Nations Stabilization Mission to Congo (MONUSCO) is to protect civilians and consolidate peace in the region. However, there have been hundreds of reports and accusations against peacekeepers for their acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence. In many of these cases, the victims have been underage girls who became pregnant due to the assaults. Formal complaints have been made, but most individual cases are lost within the bureaucracy, resulting in almost no accountability for the perpetrators or support for the survivors. William Lacy Swing, UN Special Representative to the Congo from 2003-2008 acknowledged the atrocities and in 2017, the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, urged immediate action on sexual exploitation.

## Implications

The UN has developed its own policy on sexual misconduct to address this issue. This means that the UN is partially or wholly responsible for its own regulation. How effective is this? Furthermore, it is important to note how scandals like this affect the reputation of the UN as well as people's trust of development actors more broadly.

## Comparing Perspectives

Ethical theories have been divided into rationalist theories and alternatives to them. Common rationalist theories are deontological, utilitarian, contractualist and discourse ethics. Alternatives to these include virtue ethics, feminist ethics and postmodern ethics. In this series of Briefs, one rationalist and one alternative will be explored to present contrasting views on the issue raised.

## Further Reading

Ethan B. Kapstein, Joshua W. Busby

[AIDS Drugs For All: Social Movements and Market transformations](#)

Rembert Boom

[United Nations Security Council Resolution 2272 and Secretary General Report on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#)

Sabrina Karim, Kyle Beardsley

[Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Missions: The Role of Female Peacekeepers and Gender Equality in Contributing Countries](#)

Olivera Simić, Melanie O'Brien  
[‘Peacekeeper Babies’: An Unintended Legacy of United Nations Peace Support Operations](#)

BBC News

[DR Congo: UN peacekeepers face fresh sexual abuse claims](#)

AP News: Krista Larson and Paisley Dodds

[UN peacekeepers in Congo hold record for rape, sex abuse](#)

United Nations

[Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy](#)

Maximilian Lee

[Power Imbalance: A Critical Examination of NGOs](#)

### Deontological Ethics

Deontological ethics focuses upon an action itself, whether it is right or wrong. In contrast to consequentialist perspectives, a deontological perspective does not believe that the ends justify the means. This does not mean that everything has to be perfect, however. Development operations are complex and there can be times where strategic allocation of resources are necessary. Thus, deontology can be used as a framework and guiding principle of which aid missions can use to ensure that decisions consider more than just the result. In the case of the DRC, deontology can also be used to hold the greater system accountable for the actions of the individual peacekeepers. They leave an ethical stain on the operation and the UN as a whole; whether or not there is more peace in the region is irrelevant.

### Feminist Ethics

Some ethicists, drawing upon feminist critique, argue that many ethical theories leave out valuable and insightful perspectives of women and other underrepresented communities, such as children and people living with disabilities. Feminist critique brings to the fore the gender, power and roles of the actors within the UN and the people they are tasked with serving. It would consider the gender of those who are in charge of development projects and how their actions affect women. For example, within MONUSCO there was a clear lack of priority in addressing allegations of sexual misconduct, which allowed for further abuse. A feminist recommendation for MONUSCO may consist of having more female peacekeepers or female responders in addition to increased funding to services for harassment complaints and functional systems of accountability. It is noteworthy that the UN Security Council formally considered rape to be a war crime in 2008, only 12 years ago.

### Questions for Reflection

The development regime is flawed. However, is it fair to take poor examples as the standard for the good work that is done during aid missions? Or do atrocities from the UN, the unified voice of nations and human rights values, expose key flaws in the system? Should they continue to receive our support even if they have ethical shortcomings?

This brief mainly discussed the UN, but what possible flaws do you think smaller NGOs may have? Are aid programs making a sustainable, positive difference or are we disrupting local markets with our clothing drives and charity initiatives?

Finally, do we have a moral obligation to aid other countries? How do we balance our aid to foreign countries versus our own citizens?

### References:

Akena, J. (Photographer). (2012). [UN peacekeepers in the DRC](#). [Photograph]. Retrieved from the Globe and Mail

Larson, K. (2017, September 23). [UN peacekeepers in Congo hold record for rape, sexual abuse](#). Retrieved from AP News.

[The Unchanging Reality of the UN Sex Abuse Scandal](#). (2018 July 26). Retrieved from Just Security.