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Appraising Peacekeeping Archives: The United Nations in Darfur & Southern Sudan

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What can archival appraisal and theory do for the downtrodden and mistreated multitudes around the world? What does it matter to anyone whether we preserve archives? Those in the camps for displaced persons and refugees couldn't care less. There are so many other priorities in life that outweigh keeping files an recorded information. However, it is ultimately valuable work to preserve recorded information. When one steps back and observes objectively what archivists do, then its clear that we contribute to the improvement of everyone's life. The United Nations is the best option in an imperfect world and its work with records and archives is providing hope for the future.

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Cosa possono fare la selezione e la teoria archivistica per le popolazioni oppresse e maltrattate del mondo? Che importa se gli archivi sono o non sono conservati? Ai residenti dei campi profughi non gliene può importare di meno. Tuttavia, alla fin fine è un lavoro prezioso, la salvaguardia degli archivi. Quando ci si ferma ad osservare ciò che gli archivisti effettivamente fanno, è chiaro che essi contribuiscono al miglioramento della vita di ognuno. Le Nazioni Unite sono la migliore opportunità in un mondo imperfetto, ed il loro lavoro con i documenti e gli archivi è una speranza per il futuro.

The UN Mission in Sudan has undergone some traumatic developments since the beginning of the year and our sister mission in Darfur has further been impacted by some deadly attacks on its peacekeepers. The political environment in Sudan has hit a low that no one thought possible just 5 or 6 months ago. The ICC has recently begun the process of issuing an indictment for crimes against humanity against the President of Sudan and it almost forced UNMIS to evacuate its several thousand staff from Sudan. The Mission's work was disrupted for over a week. While all these political machinations continue around us it is the citizens of Sudan who suffer and continue to live in a misery that is indescribable.

My work at UNMIS has made me think long and hard about what I do as an archivist. It's difficult to present the frustration and anxiety I feel everyday when I see what is happening in the world, in Africa and in Sudan. Things appear to be getting worse each day. The incomprehensible attack by Darfur-based rebels in Darfur in June 2008 that killed 7 peacekeepers and wounded another 17 has highlighted the dire situation we find ourselves in.

Then there was the unprecedented attack by the Justice and Equality Movement [JEM] on Khartoum in May 2008 that further brought home the fragility of the Darfur peace process in Sudan. This attack was tragic on many levels not least for the large lose of life on both sides but by the fact that 89 child soldiers are now in detention in Khartoum aged between 11 and 17. Those of you who have children of those ages might be able to imagine what it would be like to see your child with an AK-47 and sent on a suicide mission to overthrow a massively armed opponent. The situation is desperate and the world community needs to do something about it at a political level. So what can we as archivists do? Is it a pipe dream to think that we humble archivists can make a difference?

I have read many commentaries about how archival work relates to the human condition. It is clear that it does make a difference in terms of documenting human rights violations and atrocities and in turn that provides evidence of actions in a legal framework. That is the defining element of why I am still an archivist. I can make a difference in my own way. As an individual, if not as an archivist, I have the ability to make a difference. We all have that ability. It is the deliberate denigration of the human condition that compels me to

embrace my work in Sudan. I am privileged to work in Sudan despite the appalling hardships and personal sacrifices I make daily. I am also privileged to work for the United Nations. Despite all the recent negativity about the UN it is still the best option in an imperfect world. Due to what I have seen and experienced in the past decade in Africa, I feel compelled to make the archival community aware of its obligations as they relate to human rights. I am very disillusioned with the archival professional association's lack of advocacy on this issue. The ICA recently decided not to allow the creation of a dedicated human rights group but they have one for sports and architecture archives.

If we break it down to basics, the five main responsibilities of a human rights archive are ensuring historical accountability, retaining memory of the victims and survivors, supporting prosecution, documenting the extremes of repression, and chronicling the individual's power against the state. These are five very substantial reasons for creating and maintaining archives of human rights violations. The ICA would upset too many authorities if they issued statements citing such points to countries that transgressed norms of accepted behavior. This is a professional 'disconnect'. The undeniable 'duty to care' is overlooked by such associations. With regard to the Rwanda genocide, Human Rights Watch, a US-based NGO dedicated to the protection of human rights world-wide, stated: "Accurate accounts of the genocide must establish in all their complexity the roles of the leaders, the followers, and the dissidents within Rwanda as well as the parts played by various international actors. This is essential both for assessing fairly the behavior of individuals and for creating strategies for the future. We must understand how local and international protest can resonate back and forth to create the swell of outrage that will prevent or halt future genocides. This work is one of the many that must come to establish the historical record, to lay the groundwork for justice for Rwandans and accountability for all others who failed to respond to the bonds of our common humanity. The story must be told".

An important and at times overlooked aspect of the archives of human rights violations is the audiovisual component. Quite often it is journalists that film, record or photograph atrocities and they usually end up in archives. Literacy is a real problem for many in the third world so images and sounds are a very tangible way of outreach to affected communities. Once again we come to a 'disconnect' in the theory, it's a technological 'disconnect'. Technology is required to create, access and preserve multimedia content and this technology is expensive.

Before I joined the peacekeeping mission in Sudan I was the archivist at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. I left the ICTR in 2007 after 8 years. It was a terrible and at the same time a very rewarding 8 years. I had to leave the ICTR because I had become part of the archives. I had reached the point where I felt no one else was qualified to continue my work should I decide to leave. Additionally, I had become immune to the content of the archive after so long and it meant little to me to see horrendous video or photographs or to read the heart wrenching testimony of witnesses and survivors. Here I had a personal 'disconnect' with the archive itself. The contents of human rights archives can have negative as well as

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Kako uporabiti arhivsko vrednotenje pri zatiranih in izkoriščanih množicah tega sveta? Kaj tem ljudem sploh pomeni hramba in varovanje arhivskih dokumentov? Ljudje, ki živijo v begunskih kampih, gotovo ne morejo skrbeti še za to, da bodo ohranili informacije, saj morajo skrbeti v prvi vrsti za to, da si ohranijo življenje in ne za hrambo papirja, čeprav je tudi za njih pomembno, da se dokumentacija ohrani. Če se ozremo nazaj in podrobno pogledamo, kaj arhivisti počnejo, je sklep gotovo ta, da počnejo stvari za izboljšanje življenja vsakomur. Združeni narodi so gotovo tisto najboljšo področje v tem nepopolnem svetu, da se skozi njih ohrani dokumentacija in arhivski dokumenti za boljše upanje v prihodnosti.

SUMMARY

This paper will discuss the issues surrounding the management of recorded information in a peacekeeping setting in both practical terms and the more esoteric benefits of records for peacebuilding, justice and reconciliation. Appraisal of records is an important part of recordkeepers in DPKO. The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations [DPKO] has undergone a period of major review and reorganisation in the past 3-5 years. That includes the recordkeeping and archival aspects of its work as well. Centralisation of policies and guidelines has defined certain major directions and objectives of DPKO but there is still room for individual license to be innovative and resourceful. Practice directives, on-line training modules, taxonomy, retention schedules and DPKO wide electronic records management solution, will all enhance the overall quality of recorded information used, maintained and preserved over time. There is an acknowledgement at senior levels that information is essential to the management of so many missions all over the world. The Best Practice Section of DPKO is emphasising more vigorously learning from the past through initiatives such as the records management best practice discussion group and there are numerous records management references in the lessons learnt on-line library. Apart from these practical aspects of the work of managing recorded information in a peacekeeping mission it is intended to explore the possible uses of the records created, used, gathered, maintained and preserved during the life of a peacekeeping mission. How can this work assist in the process of peacekeeping / building? The five main responsibilities of human rights archives [which most peacekeeping mission archives are] are to ensure historical accountability, retain memory of the victims and survivors, support prosecution, document the

extremes of repression, and chronicle the individual's power against the state. The work of the information managers in DPKO will aid in those five main areas and appraisal is central to the outcomes.

positive affects on those who run them or access them.

Then one day I realised my passion had dissipated and could no longer work there. So in a brilliant career move I decided to accept an offer to work with UNMIS. I moved onto the next great genocide event in Africa and went to Sudan. My wife was not amused nor were my 2 daughters. They settled in Nairobi which has also become an example of the fragility of seemingly well established institutions in sub-Saharan Africa.

Archives and the pursuit of 'best practice' information management do play a role in the process of peacekeeping and/or peacebuilding in a UN context. I have read about reconciliation and restorative justice and the healing process after traumatic events such as occurred in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and so on and in general terms, a public avenue for discourse is necessary to aid the process. The concept of truth and reconciliation commissions has shown the value of such public forums for expression of both the victims and the perpetrators. Forgiveness is not something I am comfortable talking about in this forum as it would warrant an entire session on its own. Suffice it to say that forgiveness is an individual decision and can not come from a committee.

As I mentioned before, audiovisual material in human rights archives would have a big impact because literacy is a problem. There isn't only one way that people gain and use knowledge or pass on memories. In Africa it is the same. Oral traditions are well entrenched for instance. This is the case in Rwanda and rural Sudan so the written word has little impact in these areas. One would be partially justified in stating that the criminal justice archives of the ICTR is an elitist construct imposed from the first world that excludes many of the effected community by the fact it has a language policy of English and French and any audiovisual material requires a higher level of expense to maintain and access. The ICTR as an organisation and the resultant archive satisfies so few people on so many levels. Currently the completion strategy discussion of the Yugoslav and Rwanda Tribunals is contemplating putting both archives in The Hague which would just compound the tragedy of the international response to the events in both places. Logic has little to do with the politics of the UN. It's all about following the path of least resistance.

Peacekeeping is a hugely expensive undertaking. The UN DPKO has been in existence for 60 years. As one can imagine, DPKO is usually deployed to areas of the world in dire need of international support. Usually in post conflict situations but also in countries such as Cambodia when they went through an election process after the Khmer Rouge period or in Namibia again during an election period when they were granted independence. Surprisingly, there is not a vast amount of material from these operations. Since DPKO began its work in 1948-9 the appraisal process has limited what is actually kept.

During a recent Department of Peacekeeping Operations [DPKO] & Archives and Records Management Section [ARMS] organised recordkeeping workshop, it was highlighted and reinforced that the DPKO recordkeeping taxonomy advocates a uniform approach to managing recorded information based on what is a func-

tional appraisal based system of peacekeeping mission functions. This does not rule out the fact that missions are not uniform, despite the main functions being the same, missions have different mandates and hence expected results and outcomes, which affects how the main functions are implemented for activities such as Political Affairs, Civil Affairs, Human Rights, etc., here is where we draw the line between taxonomy and mission specific file classification schemes [FCS]. The taxonomy summarizes and/or defines DPKO mission functions, so it's a useful tool just like any of the many background publications on UN peacekeeping¹ to understand how DPKO addresses its broad mandate of peacekeeping and building and forms a basis of developing recordkeeping systems. While the taxonomy defines the main two levels and sometimes goes to a third of each main function; the Peacekeeping Operations Retention Schedules [PORS] goes further by providing records series of these functions. The UNMIS FCS is a functions based tool for managing the recorded information of this mission. It is a mission tool that defines recordkeeping requirements specific to the mission based on their mandates, work plans and/or goals at the same time applying PORS.

Overall, a functional based FCS development, has bridged the gap between UN HQ developed recordkeeping tools with mission recordkeeping tools and hence a better DPKO recordkeeping classification system is the result. What recorded information becomes archival is determined by the application of these function based appraisal and retention tools. The UNMIS FCS is entirely dependant upon and closely linked to the DPKO and ARMS issued taxonomy and PORS and is therefore a logical extension of those two endorsed guidelines making the UNMIS FCS a vital component in recordkeeping in this mission. As a way of mapping the relationships between the three recordkeeping tools of FCS, taxonomy and PORS, we examined the humanitarian assistance function from the UNMIS FCS and were able to confirm that we had a practical way of applying the high level taxonomy in a way that staff would be comfortable with. I believe that is critical to the adoption and success of such systems in any organisation. If the filing structure is clear and precise, then administrative staff will understand it more readily and apply it as it should be applied. It also makes training easier if one is attempting to explain functional classification systems to non-recordkeepers.

Lessons learnt and best practices are phrases commonly used in the peacekeeping department of the UN. Do I believe that they are effective? Yes and no. In Sudan little has been applied from what was learnt in Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone or Congo. I say that because the mechanisms are not fully in place, within the administrative structures of the UN, to allow for any in depth analysis of what happened before. There are no easily accessible systems in place to allow for access to information that would inform the negotiators approach to a meeting or the disarmament and reintegration officer's work in the field.

Best practice approaches in the UN are derived from a military influence in the peacekeeping world and are yet to inform civilian attitudes and functions. Take for example the fact that DPKO, which has been around since the late 1940's, has no integrated or endorsed recordkeeping system. We are hoping for a new system based on

1. See <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/intro/>.

EMC's product called Documentum combined with the Sharepoint software. At current estimates the implementation is about 12 months away. Allowing for training, change management and migrating any legacy systems, we are probably looking at 2010-11 before any established system for information management is in place in DPKO. In my opinion this is the first necessary step to ensure a real culture of creating, maintaining and accessing information according to best practices. It's the core enabler for DPKO to get out of the cycle of repetitive errors in their approach to establishing, managing and closing down a mission.

In the light of what DPKO is mandated to do, access to information both current and legacy data needs to be made available to ensure that the next peacekeeping effort of the UN is armed not with the right mix of weapons and aircraft but with the right information. It is also a fact that not all peacekeeping or peacebuilding missions, of which there are currently 20, have information managers. Only 4 of the 20 mission have professional records managers and / or archivists. Another 4 have junior grade staff who deal the mail room as well. Things are changing but my point is - 'It's 2008' some of the above missions have been around since 1948/9.

One positive aspect that has grown from the concept of best practices is the 'community of practice' of which there are around eight. One being records management. It's basically a listserv moderated by the Best Practice section at HQ and allows for a safe and secure space within which to discuss issues of common concern to peacekeeping information managers. It has proven so novel and useful that archivists and information managers from outside peacekeeping have asked to join and now we have around 75 members from throughout the UN system.

Let me briefly describe a somewhat typical example of the UN and its administrative structures and how they manage their information sources. As part of the Darfur peace negotiations, before UNAMID was fully established, a body was created called the Joint Mediation Support Team or JMST. It was created by the Security Council to support the efforts of the joint mediators of the UN and African Union, Jan Eliason and Salim Salim respectively.

The JMST facilitated numerous meetings in Arusha in Tanzania, Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt, Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, and Sirte in Libya. Incredibly there was no legal or administrative precedent for such a body in the UN's 60 year history.

There was no archive of records to consult to see how they established such a body on previous occasions. Given that no such joint UN/AU body ever existed, the question arose, how will there records be classified and appraised? Who will have access? Who is responsible for making copies so that both the UN and the AU have certified copies? Some records will only be relevant to the AU and others only to the UN. Payments made by the AU will be irrelevant to the UN accounting system so we don't need those records and vice versa. I worried for some time and asked 'can my staff and I get involved in this recordkeeping nightmare?' JMST said 'yes and no' because they did not want Sudanese nationals to have access to extremely sensitive records of closed door meetings with rebel groups but

they still wanted me to deal with their records. Thankfully Christmas came along and provided a 4 week hiatus. January 2008 saw the full establishment of the Darfur mission UNAMID and negated the need for the word 'joint' to be used any longer. The remnants of JMST are now part of UNAMID and the 6 months of their previous existence is being absorbed into existing UNAMID systems even though they have offices in Khartoum with UNMIS.

Reconciliation is one of those elusive terms that is used in many contexts. Let me say this about the concept of reconciliation and archives. Although the concept of reconciliation is somewhat vague and difficult to quantify, it is a key factor in determining the success of the UN organizations devoted to international justice and peace-keeping. It is a complex matter, involving the search for truth, justice, healing and forgiveness. The level of success in attaining reconciliation can only be properly evaluated after many years. The establishment of self-sustaining peace is an early indicator of whether or not a degree of reconciliation has been attained in a community affected by violent conflict. The aim of all peace-keeping missions is not simply to end conflict, but the establishment of peace. The successful implementation of self-sustaining peace in a post-conflict region can be determined by evaluating such criteria as disarmament, government policies, donor demands, internal or external armed interference, and outside political manipulation. But lasting peace can never truly be established without reconciliation. Justice is also a key component in the process of reconciliation. The legal process gives survivors and victims the forum in which to speak, and the opportunity to attempt to forgive the perpetrators of the atrocities they suffered. The accountability of peace-keeping missions and legal bodies is a crucial component in the process of reconciliation.

There appears to be little doubt in the professional literature or in practical experience that recordkeeping will aid the reconciliation process. As can be seen in the example of the Armenian genocide, lack of verifiable documentary evidence can seriously undermine international and local efforts to attain the goal of reconciliation. Because accountability leads to a trust in the rule of law, the archives of international courts and peace-keeping missions can benefit the process of reconciliation, assisting in the return to normalcy for the affected communities and nations. In another way the process of reconciliation is enhanced by capacity building efforts to restore legal and governmental institutions.

In an effort to support the reestablishment of institutions in the south of Sudan we have embarked on a project of capacity building in the area of archives and information management. We are aiming for a week long workshop in the near future in conjunction with UNDP and the library from UN Office in Nairobi to train those staff responsible for managing the information assets of the Government of Southern Sudan. We will also include a session for senior managers to expose them to the benefits of establishing accessible and reliable mechanisms for citizens and government employees to access information. We will be focusing on the Police Services and Legislative Assembly.

So all in all peacekeeping is still a great idea, it always has been and will be. It stems from the noblest ideals of humanity - that all

peoples of the world should be equally allowed to achieve their full potential. It's a simple philosophical view that given a chance we all have the ability to add value to human kind's progress. Unhappiness and grief are natural parts of life as are joy and hope. Forgetting is also a natural phenomenon we sometimes overlook as archivists. My passion for works archival remains intact despite the past decade of my career. I've tried to make a difference in what I do.

Earlier this year the Prosecutor of the ICC has taken the bold step to file evidence before the judges of the ICC for a decision confirming the indictment of the President of Sudan for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The evidence gathered would have come from peacekeeping operations records, ICC investigators and human rights archives around the world. At the Rwandan Tribunal [ICTR] former UNAMIR records became part of the archive of the Rwandan genocide. At the Sierra Leone Court, former Liberian president Charles Taylor's lawyer has been actively requesting copies of records from the ICTR archive in support of his defense brief. So it is evident from all this current activity that human rights archives remain relevant, required and useful. Now more than ever these archives are necessary.

Through outreach and capacity building we are trying to give back to affected communities and post conflict societies thereby enabling them to build institutions armed with the knowledge that access to information is a human right and maintaining archives is a way to ensure that human right is preserved. However, we all need to acknowledge the disconnect that is apparent when archives are associated with the third world. Some of the heavy technological solutions associated with archives will not allow for full and unfettered access for many affected communities in Africa. Nevertheless, human rights archives should be lauded for the value they add to the body of knowledge of humanity and one hopes that our professional associations and others will see value in espousing ideals that continue to support this process.

