The United Nations has developed a transition strategy for its peacekeeping operations that takes a comprehensive and long-term view and focuses on the causes of the conflict. The U.N. strategy for making effective peacekeeping transitions has three elements: (1) establishing conditions for sustainable peace, (2) coordinating efforts among the United Nations and other international organizations to establish these conditions and sustain assistance after peacekeepers withdraw, and (3) developing objectives and results-oriented measures of progress to help manage and decide when a country’s conditions warrant the withdrawal of peacekeepers.

U.N. Troops and Police Man a Security Checkpoint with East Timorese Police

The United Nations is attempting to apply the elements of this strategy to help Sierra Leone, East Timor, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo transition from conflict to sustainable peace, but it faces enormous challenges. Establishing security often takes longer and can be more expensive than originally planned in countries where rival factions may continue to fight. Developing participatory governance is also difficult in countries with little experience of accountable government. Coordinating with independent international organizations and donor nations with different priorities is also a challenge. The United Nations has not yet developed results-oriented measures of progress for the three peacekeeping operations.

Although the United Nations uses some indicators to manage the withdrawal of peacekeeping troops, they did not have results-oriented measures to assess the security situations in Sierra Leone and East Timor and subsequent events in each country showed that the situation was not as secure as available measures indicated. The U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations acknowledges that it needs better indicators by which to measure the progress peacekeeping operations are making in attaining sustainable peace. However, the department has not yet developed these indicators.